

FREEING THE NATURAL VOICE?:
PERFORMANCE, GENDER, SOCIETY

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Abstract

This thesis is about the search for the “natural voice.” It draws together elements from the disciplines of theatre, philosophy, linguistics, voice training, art history, performance studies and feminist scholarship, as well as my own practical experience as an actor and teacher of voice, to address issues of vocal agency in current criticism and theatrical performance, and to interrogate a dominant strand of voice pedagogy as well as the use of voice in contemporary American performance art.

I consider first the highly influential voice training methods of Kristin Linklater, an Anglo-American director, actor and voice coach, whose textbook, *Freeing the Natural Voice* (1976), first advanced the notion of a “natural voice.” Linklater promotes the natural voice as a more authentic form of communication, a more accurate expression of our inner being that has been hidden, inhibited and distorted by harmful and repressive societal influences; thus, she claims that through freeing the voice, one “free[s] the person” (2). I interrogate Linklater’s concept of the natural voice and suggest that her informing influences, particular style of training, and the way in which she conceives of the relationship between mind and body (which, in dualist epistemologies, become related to distinctions between male and female, and speech and voice) problematise her claims to the “natural.” I argue that Linklater’s “natural voice” is in fact a political and ideological construct that restricts the kinds of performances it can produce, particularly feminist interpretations of canonical texts.

So, what is a “natural voice”? One means of discerning this is to examine the use of the “unnatural” voice in performance. Subsequently, I focus on the work of two prominent performance artists, Karen Finley and Laurie Anderson. I read Finley’s performance of her provocative piece, *We Keep Our Victims Ready* (1990) from the perspective of *écriture féminine*, paying particular attention to her correspondence with the tropes of the “sorceress” and the “hysteric” advanced by Catherine Clément and Hélène Cixous. Anderson’s technologically mediated voice is analysed in a range of her post-1979 “electronic cabaret” works in terms of Donna Haraway’s theory of the “cyborg,” a human/machine amalgam and product of technoscientific culture that redraws traditional conceptual and material categories. Of both artists, I ask: Why do they use these highly constructed, unnatural voices? What effects do these voices have? What do they tell us about the “natural voice”? In the analyses of Finley’s and Anderson’s work I also pursue two related lines of inquiry instigated by the analysis of Linklater: how each artist addresses the mind/body problem; and how this affects her ability to produce work that extends the boundaries of feminist performance and to deploy voices that have agency, social and political force and challenge the status quo.

This focus on the nature and use of the voice in relation to performance, gender and society stands in contrast to the wealth of material on visibility, visual culture and the body in contemporary performance criticism. It also defies poststructural theories that deny the voice significance and strip agency from the speaking subject. In undertaking this project I am concerned to show that the voice is worthy of attention and is a valid subject of study in theatre and performance studies.

Chapter One

Introduction

This thesis is about the search for the natural voice. As a teacher of voice and speech for the theatre, I have worked with students and actors in a variety of institutional and professional settings. One of the chief aims of my teaching – as it was in my own training – is to enable students to discover or free their “natural voices.” The rationale of this approach is that everyone has his or her own natural voice, that the natural voice provides liberation from the detrimental effects of contemporary society on our psychology and physiology, and, consequently, that finding one’s natural voice is better not only for communication as an actor, but for life as an individual. During the ten years that I have been teaching, promoting and applying the “natural voice” method, I have come to reflect critically on its practice, claims and techniques. In particular, I have wondered: What, precisely, is this voice that I am cultivating? Is it really “natural”? What, indeed, is a “natural voice”?

The most prominent definition of the “natural voice,” which formed the basis of my own training and will be the focus of my analysis, is that expounded by Kristin Linklater in her highly influential publication, *Freeing the Natural Voice* (1976). Linklater defines the natural voice as “a voice in direct contact with the emotional impulse, shaped by the intellect, but not inhibited by it” (1). Her method is based on the assumptions that everyone has a voice capable of expressing whatever mood or feelings he or she desires, but that socially-induced habitual psychological and physical tensions prevent the voice from being released effectively, and lead to “distorted” communication. Linklater argues that our socialisation inhibits our ability to recognise the extent to which we have been affected by that process; therefore, she writes that, “I must underline [...] that in our perception of our own voices there is a vital difference to be observed between what is ‘natural’ and what is ‘familiar’” (1). Linklater’s aim is to liberate this natural voice through the long-term practice of a structured series of exercises that encourage communication from the whole body, not only the head, so that “the person is heard, not the person’s voice,” along with the belief that “to free the voice is to free the person” (2).

Upon initial examination, Linklater’s explanation appears relatively straightforward and unproblematic: throw off society’s restraints and embrace a renewed sense of self. However, upon reflection, her thesis raises several questions,

such as: What does “natural” mean in this context, and what are its implications? Does “natural” really equal “neutral,” as Linklater seems to claim? If the voice is natural, why are so many exercises necessary to develop and maintain it? If “to free the voice is to free the person,” what are the implications? If one acquires a natural voice, does one also become a “natural person”? What is a natural person? Does Linklater’s privileging of nature, the emotions and the body indicate an ideological underpinning? Could this be politically problematic? What are the implications of this highly prescriptive, structured approach to voice training? Might it in fact *restrict* the range of moods and expressions capable of being produced? Consequently, the more deeply we delve into Linklater’s conception of the natural voice, the more untidy, complicated and unsatisfying the concept becomes.

The inconclusiveness of Linklater’s concept and methods motivates a search for the “natural voice.” One approach to answering the question of what the natural voice is, is to examine the “unnatural” voice – that is, the obviously constructed and manipulated voice – as a concept in performance. Essentially, if the voice is *denaturalised* for various political purposes, might it not in fact be the case that Linklater’s “natural” voice is also constructed, politicised and informed by certain ideologies? Furthermore, might an analysis of the unnatural voice lead toward a more convincing definition of a natural voice? Accordingly, I investigate the work of two contemporary feminist American performance artists, Karen Finley and Laurie Anderson. Finley and Anderson were chosen because each uses “unnatural” voices in prominent ways, but their means and modes are antithetical.

Karen Finley began her career in the late 1970s. She adopts a confrontational and controversial performance persona to expose and condemn what she sees as the violent and sexist culture of the contemporary United States. Finley concentrates specifically upon the ways in which women are debased and abused by a capitalist, patriarchal society. Finley speaks in a collection of voices to articulate cultural resistance, adopting the personae of an assortment of society’s victims, and linking their personal, autobiographical confessions to the political and the collective. She says that, “I stir people to be responsible for what’s going on in their personal lives, in their one-to-one relationships, interweaving this into the whole society’s corruption” (Schechner, 254). Finley’s vocal performance is characterised by its highly emotional content and delivery and her focus on the body as the source of her voices and the ground of experience. Interestingly, Finley describes herself as a “medium” for her

voices: “I put myself into a state, for some reason it’s important, so that things come in and out of me, I’m almost like a vehicle” (258), and she refers to her performance as a “spiritual mask” that “breaks[s] the routine of day-to-day acting” (258). Nevertheless, Finley’s performance pieces are not wholly spontaneous, but are prepared and formally organised; thus, her voices are conscious, deliberate constructs that support her political agenda.

Laurie Anderson has been working as a performance artist since the late 1960s. A notable aspect of Anderson’s performance art is its eclecticism: she samples elements from such genres of cultural performance as storytelling, theatre, ritual, dance, music, popular entertainment and sports. As Jon McKenzie points out: “Over her career, [Anderson] has mixed the autobiographical with the historical and, using one to filter the other, has built an idiosyncratic collection of words, sounds, gestures and images downloaded from various social archives, especially that of the United States (31). Through her performances, Anderson undertakes a critical examination of the United States, trying to create a sense of what it means to live in a postmodern technological society. Technology is not only the theme but the vehicle of performance; since the late 1970s, Anderson’s work has been characterised by her technological manipulation of musical instruments, performing objects, and voice. Through the electronic mediation of her voice, Anderson can produce a range of speaking styles, which are amplified and electronically processed to produce changes in pitch and timbre, and to portray different characters. Significantly, she employs “electronic vocal transvestism” (Lavey, 277), where she uses electronic mediation to cross gender. Anderson produces voices that arise from human/machine interfaces at the site of her body, and can also “throw” her voice to animate separate objects. If Finley’s vocal performance is defined by its passionate embodiment, then Anderson’s is defined by its ironic distance. Through her use of voice Anderson establishes a liminal position for herself in terms of gender, identity, embodiment and spatial relationships. The questions asked of both Finley and Anderson are: How and why are these voices used? What effects do they have? What can these explicitly unnatural, highly constructed voices tell us about the natural voice?

This research into the nature and existence of the “natural voice” employs textual and performance analysis, with reference to my own practical experience as a performer and teacher of voice. This work contributes towards an understanding of the use of voice in performance by interrogating a dominant way of working within

the discourse of voice training and vocal pedagogy. Additionally, the vast majority of the discourse on gender and performance has focused on the *visual* – issues of the body; very little work, comparatively, has been undertaken on the *aural* – specifically the *vocal* in this context. Therefore, through an investigation of Finley and Anderson, I hope to amplify our understanding of the use of voice in the work of two influential performance artists who have not been analysed carefully in terms of voice before.

An interrogation of Linklater foregrounds two related supplementary lines of inquiry, which are pursued simultaneously in the analyses of Finley and Anderson. The first is the issue of the mind/body dichotomy, in which mind and body are considered as two mutually exclusive elements, with mind occupying the privileged position in the pair. Linklater's attempt to reconcile the split between mind and body in the way we conceive of and practice voicework brings this issue to the forefront. This leads into the second issue, which is the agency of the female speaking subject. The mind/body dualism has, historically, entailed a similar distinction between male and female, in which the female, associated with the body, occupies a subordinate position to the masculine, aligned with the mind. Consequently, the thesis adopts two ancillary considerations: How do Finley and Anderson each address the mind/body problem? How do their respective positions enable or disable their ability to speak with voices that have feminist power, agency, and social force?

In order to answer these various questions, it is necessary to introduce some background material to contextualise the thesis topic and argument. This thesis integrates four main discourses or veins of thought. These are: an overview of philosophies of voice and speech, with an explanation for the decline of attention to voice in contemporary performance criticism; approaches to voice training in the twentieth century; a general overview of twentieth-century performance art and its relevance to the work of Finley and Anderson; and the mind/body problem and its relation to voice and contemporary feminist thought.

An overview of philosophies of voice and speech

In *The Sound of Meaning: Theories of Voice in Twentieth-Century Thought and Performance*, Andrew Kimbrough provides a useful overview of some of the key ideas in twentieth century views of voice. He argues that, broadly speaking, there are two philosophical movements responsible for the decline of attention to the spoken voice in postmodern performance and contemporary criticism: structuralism and

poststructuralism. Prior to these movements, for almost two thousand years, the spoken word enjoyed a privileged status in the signification of truth. Plato believed that speech flowed directly from the soul, and that the outer, spoken form of *logos* (divine and universal reason) was a reflection of the inner *logos* of the soul; thus the spoken word was a revelation and formulation of essential and universal truth (8-10). Jacques Derrida termed this philosophy “phonologocentrism.” Subsequent philosophers such as Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, Descartes, Berkeley, Hegel and Husserl all espoused some form of phonologocentric belief, and this tradition held a fairly stable position in western philosophical thought until the early twentieth century.

The last of these philosophers, Edmund Husserl, developed the discourse of phenomenology, a foundationalism grounded in a recognition of the *cogito* (rational consciousness) as the locus of knowing and being. (The notion of the *cogito*, taken from Descartes, is in many ways similar to Plato’s *logos*.) In his writing on voice and speech, Husserl argued that although sounds of words and the things they signify have no ontological relationship, in their spoken application words nonetheless take on a specific and meaningful relationship with the things signified; the word and the thing establish a bond, or “phenomenal relationship” (Kimbrough, 91). In *Investigations* (1901) and *Ideas I* (1913), Husserl advanced a view of the voice that came to be shared by successive phenomenologists Martin Heidegger and Maurice Merleau-Ponty: the dependence of signification upon the corporeality of the speaker; the ability of vocal sounds to become constituent of sense; and the operation of *logos* within both language and voice as an original *revelation* of states of being or potential meanings, not just linguistically structured representations of them (85, 113). In this way, the phenomenological view of the voice adheres to revised traditional views of phonologocentrism that situate the voice as a primary vehicle for the communication of meaning and truth.

Academic movements served to destabilise the phonologocentric tradition. Contrary to phenomenologists, structuralists focused on the *constructed* nature of language. In *A Course on General Linguistics* (1915), Ferdinand de Saussure argued that language was an arbitrary construct in which the phonetic properties of words do not have a direct ontological relationship to the things they signify, and that each sign is definable only by its *difference* from other signs. Saussure maintained that linguistic *structure* produces the conceptions of reality available in human discourse

and dictates possibilities of expression; thus, thought no longer determines language: language determines thought. The structural development in linguistics dislodged the voice from its privileged place in traditional philosophical epistemologies (Kimbrough, 138). Since sound could no longer be considered constituent of sense, the spoken word did not offer special access to transcendent truths, but became just *one* of many means by which ideas find expression.

By arguing that words are identified and understood not so much by the sounds they contain, but how they contrast with the sounds of other words, Saussure provided Derrida with the basis of his deconstructive argument against Husserl. In “The Voice That Keeps Silence” in *Speech and Phenomena* (1973), Derrida critiques the spoken voice as complicitous with the logocentric tradition of western thought. Taking up the notion that signs are defined only by their difference from, and their reference to, other signs (encapsulated in his concept of *différance*), Derrida argued that there can be no originary meaning, no original sense and concomitant presence; thus, the voice can never point to an ideal and objective meaning (*SP*, 70-87).

Derrida’s poststructuralist deconstruction of the phonologocentric tradition displayed the relativity and fallibility of spoken language, putting the voice into greater question and threatening to efface the traditional sense of agency afforded the speaking subject. In this way, it can be argued that poststructuralism ideologically informs the silencing of the speaking subject believed to have taken place in postmodern performance (Kimbrough, 194). The proposition that theatre critics view the spoken word on stage as empty signification, devoid of the meaning afforded by traditional epistemologies is supported by the fact that the majority of publications addressing the postmodern stage ignore the voice and focus overwhelmingly on the presentation of the human body and the interpretation of dramatic text. Critic Jacqueline Martin offers a typical response when she asserts that, “In the postmodern theatre, speech has no function except to show its failure as a medium of communication” (31).

These two academic philosophic movements, structuralism and poststructuralism, have contributed to the dearth of attention on the spoken voice in contemporary performance. I disagree with the poststructuralist position. What I believe, and hope to show, is that there is a disparity between poststructural views and the practical use of voice, speech and language on the contemporary stage. My investigation into the use of voice in voice training and postmodern theatrical practice

reveals that, while not necessarily providing unconstructed or unmediated access to transcendent truths, or revealing or being located within a stable, unitary subject, the voice is still used to *say something*, and has political and social force. This neglect of the voice explains one of the reasons why this thesis comes to be written, and also suggests how this thesis can make a useful contribution to theatre and performance scholarship.

Approaches to voice training in the twentieth century

My approach is influenced, in part, by coming from the discourse of voice training for the theatre, which stands in contrast to recent philosophical thought. While not informed directly by the writings of the phenomenological philosophers, a strain of phenomenological thought may be detected in twentieth century theatre practice, especially as regards voice training for theatrical expression in stage actors, and still persists to the present. Many theatre practitioners have evinced a belief in the voice as providing a locus of meaning, significantly, not only through linguistic utterance, but through the production of sound. They also demonstrate an investment in the voice as aiding the manifestation of theatrical presence and, as such, a conduit for the expression of essential and universal truths. Within this line of thinking, more attention is paid to the *voice* behind the spoken word. Since the voice is a vehicle for the meaningful, valuable expression of truth, the focus comes to be upon *releasing*, *freeing* and *unblocking* that voice. Two divergent approaches to voice training for the theatre came to the fore during the twentieth century. One strand focused on the relationship between the voice and the individual's personal and emotional identity, and emphasised psycho-physical training to release the voice and the actor's innate sense of self. The other, drawing upon the rhetorical tradition and principles of elocution, privileged the voice's relation to social identity, emphasising speech styles that conformed to social standards of beauty and efficacy.

There is no history of voice training *per se*, but the closest is Jacqueline Martin's *Voice in Modern Theatre*, which surveys aspects of theatre voice over the past century, concentrating mainly upon the first strand of practice. Martin argues that, during the twentieth century, major changes in the ideals of vocal delivery have come not from discipline, rhetoric or individual actors, but from a number of directors who have evolved their own theories about the meaning and function of theatre, which they have implemented in their productions (48). The first to implement

modern vocal training in the theatre was Konstantin Stanislavski (1863-1938) in his work with the Moscow Art Theatre. The sources of Stanislavski's teaching on voice were Volkonski's *The Expressive Word* (1913) and Ushakov's *Brief Introduction to the Science of Language* (1913). Stanislavski insisted that the actor's delivery should work to convey every subtle nuance which his or her voice and understanding of the text could realise. This necessitated regular training: "The conclusion to be reached is that even a good natural voice should be developed not only for singing but for speech" (Stanislavski *BC*, 95). He maintained that, rather than actors imitating gestures and intonation, they should train daily to free body of unnecessary tensions, or "the evil that results from muscular spasms and physical contractions" (*AP*, 96-7), to develop the ability "to express externally what has been created within" (*BC*, 94) – the inner experiences of the creative process. Influenced by recent advances in psychology and psychotherapy, Stanislavski favoured psycho-physical exercises, in which bodily relaxation assisted mental relaxation and freedom and vice versa.

Concepts and techniques similar to Stanislavski's are also found in the work of later practitioners. In Alfred Wolfsohn's work with what later became the Roy Hart Theatre in England, vocal delivery was paramount. During his traumatic experiences in the First World War, Wolfsohn (1896-1962) discovered the potential of the human voice to reveal the inner being of an individual's personality, and spent his life trying to determine why our voices are often shackled, monotonous and cramped. He advocated that the voice is not the function solely of any anatomical structure, but rather the expression of the whole personality, and that through the voice all aspects of the individual could be developed: "The voice and the person are one [...] and when one of them is expanded so will the other be" (Wolfsohn, 47). Wolfsohn developed a "whole voice" method of voice production, which took a holistic view in order to link "body and soul." His approach demonstrates a strong link between the voice and the psychological growth of the individual, in which the actor releases emotional blocks in order to realise his creative potential more readily (Martin, 64).

Wolfsohn had a marked influence on both Jerzy Grotowski (1933-1999) and Peter Brook (1925 –). Grotowski rejected the noble tones and perfect diction being taught in Poland in the late 1950s, and instead developed exercises based on images to assist in the opening of the vocal apparatus (70). The purpose of the exercises was to eradicate psychological, emotional and physical blockages which inhibited the creative flow, with a focus on body work as antecedent to vocal expression. In

Grotowski's method, the actor seeks to eliminate the resistances and obstacles that hinder him or her in his or her creative task, by discovering the difficulties, determining the causes and eradicating them (Grotowski, 101-2). Similarly, in England, Brook's beliefs about acting represented those of many earlier directors. He resisted artificiality, and believed that the actor's voice and creative abilities should be open to nature and the instinct of the moment (Martin, 77). As he maintains: "The body must be ready and sensitive, but that isn't all. The voice has to open and ready. The emotions have to open and free" (Innes, 185). To this end, Brook advocated "precise exercises to liberate the voice, not so that one learns how to do, but how to permit – how to set the voice free" (Brook in Berry *VA*, 3).

So far, this overview has traced a male-centred tradition of philosophers and practitioners. After the mid-twentieth century, and after Peter Brook in particular, came a generation of female voice teachers who established their own methods and published their own books. The rise of the female voice teacher in the psycho-physical, holistic vein was initiated by Iris Warren, who started to become well-known in the 1930s through her pioneering work in the study of voice, especially her melding of psychological knowledge with voicework. Warren ran a private studio in London, coaching prominent stage and screen actors such as Geraldine McEwan, Anna Massey, Joan Greenwood, Christopher Plummer and Peter McEnery. Warren also worked at the Old Vic Theatre in London with Michel Saint-Denis during the late 1940s, then, in 1951, was employed by Michael McOwan, then director of The London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art. Warren remained at LAMDA (later in a part-time capacity) until her death from cancer in 1963. She had an enormous formative influence on Kristin Linklater, and Linklater's philosophy and methods owe much to Warren's teaching and research. After the 1960s, the notion of a link between a free voice, free emotions and a stronger sense of self, as well as the concept of discovering one's true voice, became melded with second-wave feminist thought. Consequently, the 1970s and afterward witnessed the awakening of several voice teachers who produced books with titles like, *The Right to Speak* (Patsy Rodenburg), and *Finding Your Voice* (Barbara Houseman), which conceived of a kind of empowerment for women through finding themselves and freeing their voices, allowing themselves to be heard. Linklater's work is also a product of this intellectual, political and aesthetic environment. What differentiates Linklater is the in-depth structure of her approach, her particular synthesis of all these preceding elements,

and, most importantly, her claims to the *natural*, which, in my opinion, makes her the most interesting practitioner.

This strand of voice training is concerned with a relationship between mind and body, in which the body is used to unlock the mind, and emotion is as important as noetic faculty. Much of the voicework is body-centred, aimed at the production of sound as a necessary precursor and complement to articulated speech, perceived as a product of the mind. Voicework in this vein becomes related to the search for self, meaning and truth, and emphasises the individual's personal and emotional identity. The second, elocutory stand of voice training is also situated in a phenomenological philosophy, but concentrates upon the connections between voice and social identity. In its application to theatre, this type of trained voice is more concerned with prescribed aesthetic standards, upheld by "the voice beautiful."

Elocution flourished during the nineteenth century, a period that valorised social performance and class-consciousness. As a discipline, elocution persisted into the twentieth century, fuelled by developments in speech science and by greater opportunities for social mobility where "speaking well" was one of the chief requirements for advancement (as Shaw's *Pygmalion* demonstrates). Elocution was also informed by the rhetorical tradition – the practical manifestation of phonologocentrism – which was based on the assumption that if the voice is a channel for meaning and truth, then well-trained voices should be most worthy of attention and authority. One of the most famous trainers was Elsie Fogerty (1865-1945). Fogerty was a British elocutionist, and one of the leading pioneers of voice and speech training in the first quarter of the twentieth century. Her approach was characterised by the use of scientific principles in her methods of voice training, especially physiology and phonetics. In 1906, Fogerty founded the Central School of Speech and Drama in London, which is still one of Britain's leading institutions for the study of voice. Most of Britain's most prominent actors learned their trademark voices from Fogerty, including Sir Laurence Olivier and Dame Peggy Ashcroft.¹

Fogerty's most prominent ideas and techniques are outlined in *Voice Craft: A Manual of Practice in English Speech* (1930). Although *Voice Craft* incorporates innovative principles in the study of voice, it is clear that her voice training is designed to foster good social impressions, rather than nurture individual expression.

¹ For more information about Fogerty's life and work, see Marion Cole. *Fogie: the Life of Elsie Fogerty*, C.B.E. (London: P. Davies, 1967).

Like many of her fellow elocutionists, Fogerty makes class-based judgements about what constitutes “good” or “bad” speech, and promotes a “perfect” using of the voice that conforms to an arbitrary, socially constructed standard based on “South-eastern educated speech” (Fogerty, 89). In contrast to the theatre directors, Fogerty’s exercises for dramatic diction are located in the mask of the face, rather than incorporating the whole body. Fogerty’s project is not to reveal some kind of emotive core of the individual that will enable them to express meaning and truth, although she certainly reveals a faith in the spoken voice to reveal particular kinds of social “truths,” which are equated with national identity and cultural imperialism. In this way, through its homogenising, standardising influence, voice training becomes a tool to foster national pride and ensure national collectivity. This view is characterised strongly by Fogerty’s social, political and economic environment of Britain in the interwar years, particularly the reaction to the threat of Fascism. Fogerty’s patriotism is evident when she declares that, “When a nation has cared for speech like this, and made this art of speech a thing of pride and great honour to the whole country, that nation has left a gift of beauty to the world and the men and women belonging to it have had true cause for pride in their nation” (7). The final page of *Voice Craft* reiterates the ideology which has been implicit, but not obvious, throughout the exercises. Fogerty closes with a pious exhortation to her readers:

This language is your greatest heritage. Make up your mind not to leave it poorer and less beautiful from the use you make of it. It is a world-wide possession today. More than we can guess depends on the effort we make to keep it at one with itself and worthy of its history and of its future. [...] By your use of the living word men will know whence *you* have come. Do not be ashamed to speak it worthily and soberly. (122)

Fogerty’s training methods reveal an auraticising of Received Pronunciation and a deep-seated fear of linguistic change. The “voice beautiful” mode of elocution lost popularity after the 1960s, when social and political upheavals led to greater class freedom. Once people no longer had to be upper-class to succeed, these methods came to be perceived as stuffy, repressive and representative of outmoded social values.

Elocution training is the tradition that Linklater works against. While applauding the use of scientific principles, Linklater claims a strong resistance to voice training methods that privilege speech over voice, the social over the individual, culture over nature, and mind over body. Thus, Fogerty is an important antecedent for

Linklater, because Linklater's methods are defined as much by what she reacts against than by what she seeks to emulate. Despite their ideological differences, these two strands of voice training both reveal a vested interest in the power of the voice and the spoken word to articulate meaning and truth. In this way, they continue in the same tradition as phenomenological philosophy, and show, in practice, an overt opposition to the poststructuralist-deconstructionist mode of thinking about the voice.

Voice in twentieth-century performance art and the work of Finley and Anderson

Another discourse of performance practice necessary to contextualise my thesis topic and argument is the tradition of twentieth-century performance art that precedes and informs the work of Karen Finley and Laurie Anderson. In *Performance: Live Art 1909 to the Present*, RoseLee Goldberg defines performance art as "an art that utilises many media relating to public spectacle, theatre, and dance but it is characterised by being executed by fine artists and reflecting fine art preoccupations" (f/f). Samuel McBride also adds that "performance" is construed to suggest that some action or event is taking place and implies temporality, which differs from the original art object that is static and atemporal (*PLA*, 119-20). Goldberg notes that tribal ritual, medieval mystery plays, the court jester, vaudeville, cabaret and rock music are all sources or precedents for types of performance art.

Performance functions as one means of expression for dissidents who have attempted to find other means to evaluate the art experience in everyday life, especially because the medium provides an effective way of appealing directly to a large public, as well as shocking audiences into reassessing their own notions of art and its relation to culture (Goldberg *P*, 6). Historically, then, the base for much performance art has been anarchic, a rebellion against the mainstream and hegemonic. More recently, some performance artists have expanded beyond a direct examination of the relationship between art and society to pursue broader social concerns, and this influence is evident in the work of Finley and Anderson. Also significant for these two artists is the fact that, while the visual has always been important, a considerable amount of performance art has shown a vested interest in the in the power of the *voice* to articulate the artist's position, to stage cultural and aesthetic resistance, and to effect social change. Although twentieth-century western performance art is not generally influenced by the same philosophical traditions as voice training disciplines, the agency of the speaking subject is a notable element. Importantly, performance

artists have added new perspectives to the use of voice in performance, experimenting with innovative vocalisations and articulations, some of which may offer more productive alternatives to the use of voice in the conventional theatre.

There are several examples of the use of voice in the performance art of the past century. In the early twentieth century, the Italian Futurists relied on public declamation as a means to direct their work at a large audience. Voice also featured strongly in the work of the artists of the Dada movement, a protest by a group of European artists against the First World War, bourgeois society, and the conservatism of traditional thought. Dada artist Frank Wedekind used expressionist techniques in his early work, which included monologues and songs, and revelled in the licence given to the artist to be a mad outsider, exempt from society's normal behaviour, although he knew that such licence was granted only because the role of artist was considered insignificant, more tolerated than accepted. Taking up the cause of artist against the complacent public at large, Wedekind was joined by others in Munich and elsewhere and began to use performance as a cutting edge against society (Goldberg *P*, 35). These Dadaesque attitudes and modes of resistance are one antecedent for the work of Karen Finley.

Voice played a significant role in the early development of performance art in the United States. Artists such as John Cage, Robert Rauschenburg, Merce Cunningham and John Dine who collaborated to produce "happenings," or one-time performances, at Black Mountain College in North Carolina in the early 1950s, explored new ways of expressing themselves vocally. Cage, especially, experimented with new uses of sound, mostly through technological manipulation, and his work has had a principal influence upon Laurie Anderson. Notably, this movement coincided with the rise of the Beat Generation, a group of writers that included William S. Burroughs, Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac and Neal Cassady. Their work was marked by a shared interest in spiritual liberation, which manifested itself in candid personal content and open forms of verse and prose. In their writing and lifestyle the Beats resisted tradition and were openly experimental (Watson, 5-6). Most notably, they staged live readings, or performances, of their work. Aspects of both Finley's and Anderson's art are characterised by the influence, style and content of Beat performance poetry as a way of articulating social comment.

Immediate antecedents for Finley and Anderson may be found in 1970s performance art. The art of the 1970s was precipitated by the countercultural

revolutions of 1968 that unsettled cultural and social life throughout Europe and the United States and, in the art world, engendered a mood of irritation and anger against prevailing structures (Goldberg *P*, 98). Performance art of this period took a number of different forms, but two chief trends are strongly evident, the first of which contextualises and motivates Finley's work, and the second, Anderson's. The first trend was a movement that valued expressionist techniques, and was emotive and cathartic. It was strongly influenced by the theory and practice of psychoanalysis. Performances were intimate and confessional, using intense dramatic self-expression, with an emphasis on the voice *telling* tales, articulating personal experience or fantasies. These performances often involved ritual and pain, releasing repressed energy as well as an act of purification and redemption through suffering. This genre featured such artists as Yoko Ono, Stuart Brisley, Chris Burden, Charlotte Moorman and Vito Acconci, many of whom Finley considered to be her "mentors and masters" (Finley *DKI*, 77-8).

The second trend was an entertaining pop/rock idiom. It also included elements of autobiographical performance, but tended to be less personalised and intense. This genre introduced younger artists who refused to separate the world of art from their own cultural period, and who created what Goldberg labels "a sophisticated blend of recent performance precedents with their own lifestyles and sensibilities" (122). These artists drew upon Hollywood, rock music, soap opera and cabaret, as well as other performance art influences, and after 1975, incorporated the punk aesthetic. The voice played an important role as a means of communicating, entertaining and interacting with the audience, as well as inciting political action. In contrast to the first trend of 1970s performance, the voice was not so grounded in the body, since these artists placed less emphasis on the body as the site of knowing and experience. This was the context from which Anderson's work arose.

The mind/body dichotomy and its relationship to voice and feminist thought

This discussion of voice and language philosophies, and the treatment of the voice in voice and speech training and performance art, repeatedly draws attention to the split between the mind and the body, foregrounding a dualist epistemology. In *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*, Elizabeth Grosz explains that, "Dualism is the belief that there are two mutually exclusive types of 'thing,' physical and mental, body and mind, that compose the universe in general and the subject in

particular” (vii). Within this framework, the dichotomously opposed characteristics are hierarchised: one term of the pair is privileged, while the other is subordinated. In the tradition of western philosophical thought, mind has been privileged over the body; the body has been disavowed and the disembodied nature of the mind has been accentuated. For example, in Plato’s doctrine of the Forms, matter is a denigrated, imperfect version of the Idea, while in Christianity, the body is correlated with the distinction between mortal and immortal (Grosz, 5-6). Descartes’ philosophy did not simply advocate the separation of mind from body, but the *soul* from *nature*; the body functions according to laws of nature, while the soul (the rational consciousness, *cogito*) has no place in the natural world. In this way, Descartes succeeded in linking the mind/body opposition to the foundations of knowledge itself, situating the mind in a hierarchical position above nature, including the body as a thing in nature. From this reasoning, Grosz avers what we have inherited the belief that

Body is thus what is not mind, what is distinct from and other than the privileged term. It is what the mind must expel in order to retain its ‘integrity.’ It is implicitly defined as unruly, disruptive, in need of direction and judgement, merely incidental to the defining characteristics of mind, reason or personal identity through its opposition to consciousness, to the psyche and other privileged terms within philosophical thought. (3)

The mind/body opposition has become correlated with a number of other hierarchically oppositional pairs, such as: reason/passion, sense/sensibility, inside/outside, self/other, depth/surface, reality/appearance, mechanism/vitalism, transcendence/immanence, temporality/spatiality, psychology/physiology and form/matter. It is also possible to argue that there exists a similar opposition between *speech* and *voice*, in which speech is associated with the mind, and voice with the body. The distinction here is the spoken word as opposed to the production of vocal sound. The spoken word – speech – is related to language, reason and the mind, and is therefore privileged. This view, of course, is bound inherently to the phonologocentric belief that truth and being are revealed through the spoken word. Therefore, we observe historically a selective judgement applied to sounds, determining which ones count as articulate speech, and which do not (note, later, elocution’s anxiety to maintain control over the speaking voice and defend against “lapses” in articulated sound). For instance, Thomas Hobbes writes:

But the most noble and profitable invention of all other, was that of *speech*, consisting of *names* or *appellations*, and their connection;

whereby men register their thoughts, recall them when they are past, and also declare them to one another for mutual utility and conversation; without which there had been among men neither commonwealth, nor society, nor contract, nor peace, no more than amongst lions, bears and wolves. (*Leviathan IV*, 140-41)

Speech in this context is related to rationality and thought, and associated with culture and society, and contrasted with nature and the animal. Interestingly, this tradition in turn gives rise to a “naturalising” of the constructed aspects of speech: the artificial and manmade is defined as the natural. For instance, John Locke maintains that “words, which were by nature so well adapted to that purpose, come to be made use of by men as the signs of their ideas” (*Essay III*, II; Appelbaum, x). This view also casts alternative uses of the voice into the “other” or the simply “wrong.” This domination of the cognitive aspect of vocal experience over the kinaesthetic and proprioceptive subordinates the *voice*, or the sound produced by the body’s vocal apparatus that is not articulated into words. As I have established, the twentieth-century tradition of theatre voice (Kristin Linklater in particular) has tried to resist this dichotomy and emphasise the interconnectedness of mind and body by promoting whole-body communication, body work to release mental blocks, and exercises that develop the production of sound without diction.

The dualist ontology that separates and hierarchises mind and body is also correlated with *male* and *female*. Man and mind, woman and body, are representationally aligned. Misogynist discourses then construct secondary social positions for women by containing them within bodies that are represented as frail, imperfect, unruly and unreliable, and subject to various intrusions that are not under conscious, rational control (Grosz, 13; Jaggar and Bordo, 4). Significantly in this context, voice and the body become aligned with femininity, which to some extent explains the traditional distrust of women’s “unruly” voices, and the discouragement of women who speak as rational subjects. Consequently, this dualistic framework – mind/body, speech/voice, man/woman – undermines the agency of women as speaking subjects.

Unsurprisingly, contemporary feminist epistemologies have posited that the Cartesian dualist framework is fundamentally inadequate. Since the 1960s, several feminist theorists have attempted to address this dichotomy, including the French feminists, Luce Irigaray, Catherine Clément and Hélène Cixous with their practice of *écriture féminine* (writing the body, speaking the body) which openly attacks dualism

and its collusion with patriarchal structures and logocentrism; and Donna Haraway's notion of the "cyborg," a human/machine amalgam that provides new possibilities for thinking about contemporary woman identity, subjectivity and bodies. Grosz also recommends prescriptions – but no cures – for reconfigurations of the body in accounts of subjectivity that are no longer conceived in dualist terms. She proposes that we refuse singular models, that is, one type of body by which others are judged, and avoid strictly biological or essentialist accounts of the body. She advocates some kind of articulation between the biological and psychological, between the inside and outside of the body. Grosz also suggests that binaries might be problematised by regarding the body as a threshold or a borderline that hovers undecidably between binary pairs (21-2). This mind/body problem and its relationship to voice/speech and male/female dichotomies, as well as its implications for women's agency as speaking subjects, will be explored throughout the thesis in the work of Linklater, Finley and Anderson.

Having described the four chief discourses that contextualise the thesis topic and its argument, I shall outline the structure and content of the following chapters.

Chapter Two. Pinning Down the Natural Voice: Kristin Linklater's Vocal Pedagogy

In this chapter, I examine the structure and content of Linklater's text, *Freeing the Natural Voice* (1976), regarding its claims to the "natural voice." I analyse the discourse of the natural voice and the philosophies that contribute to Linklater's ideology, especially Romanticism and psychotherapy. I investigate the extent to which Linklater's concept of "natural" is in fact a politicised construct, and consider its implications for theatrical performance. I also interrogate Linklater's purported melding of mind and body in her vocal pedagogy, reading her training methods from the perspective of Foucault's theory of "docile bodies." I suggest that Linklater's methods are more middle-class, and produce more hegemonic effects, than her agenda may indicate initially, and submit that her "natural voice" may be particularly restrictive for performances – especially of canonical texts – that are feminist, or encourage social change.

Chapter Three. Sorceress and Hysteric: Voice and the Performance Art of Karen Finley

This chapter focuses on Finley's performance art in terms of her use of an "unnatural" voice in her politically provocative work, *We Keep Our Victims Ready* (1990). I analyse Finley's performance according to the French feminist theory of *écriture féminine*; in particular, I explore how Finley's vocal performance aligns her with the "sorceress" and "hysteric" advanced by Catherine Clément and Hélène Cixous as powerful, transgressive speaking and performing figures, and exemplary tropes for women in a patriarchal society. Additionally, I ask: How does Finley's voice function as a feminist voice that evokes social change? How does she deal with the issue of the mind/body problem? What does Finley's performance tell us about the "natural voice"?

Chapter Four. Freeing the Cyborg Voice: Voice and the Performance Art of Laurie Anderson

In this chapter, I examine Laurie Anderson's technologically created and mediated "unnatural" voices across a more general spectrum of her work. I analyse aspects of four of her major performances: *United States I-IV* (1979-1983), *Home of the Brave* (1986), *Stories from the Nerve Bible* (1992), and the CD-ROM, *Puppet Motel* (1995). I read her use of voice and her performance persona according to Donna Haraway's notion of the "cyborg," a psycho-social and physical mixture of human and machine that offers new potential for negotiating dualistic epistemologies in a postmodern technological society. I investigate the ways in which Anderson uses and engages with her "cyborg voices," invoking theories of ventriloquism and mimesis to aid my analysis. Finally, I ask what Anderson's performance tells us about the "natural voice."

Chapter Five. Conclusion

Having examined first the "natural voice" and then two instances of the "unnatural" voice in performance, what can be said about the natural voice? What can be said about the mind/body problem and its relationship to voice in feminist performance? What has writing this thesis meant for me?

Chapter Two

Pinning Down the Natural Voice: Kristin Linklater's Vocal Pedagogy

As a Speech and Drama teacher, I have worked with primary-aged children in a school, with secondary and tertiary students in my private studio, and with university students. Voicework is a major component of my teaching, with the aim of generating a “natural,” well-produced voice. The voice work I do is based on my own training as a performer and teacher of voice. When teaching voice, I often find myself encouraging students to “Breathe from the diaphragm,” “Place the voice forward,” “Make sure the articulators are flexible and avoid tension in the lower jaw,” or “Work on an open sound, with less nasality.” Often, I wonder: Why am I doing this? What are these methods that I am perpetuating? What kind of voice, precisely, am I trying to cultivate in my students? Is it a “natural” one? What, in fact, is a “natural” voice?

One of the main aims of conventional theatrical voice training methods of the past 30 years has been to achieve or “free” a “natural” voice. The natural voice has been advanced as an ideal, and has been promoted along with the notion that each of us has his or her own natural voice. The chief exponent of natural voice training is Kristin Linklater. In this chapter, I analyse the content and implications of Linklater's voice training programme. Specifically, I argue that contrary to her anti-establishment claims, Linklater's vocal pedagogy is informed by a predominantly middle-class ideology, and I examine the impact of this ideology on the kinds of performances that her voice work can generate, especially in the treatment of Shakespearean texts. This view problematises the popular notion of the natural voice as “natural,” that is, a neutral, free voice, liberated from the bonds of a damaging socialisation and representative of the individual's true self. Linklater's middle-class ideology is supported by her particular blend of Romanticism, psychotherapy and cultural imperialism. Her psychotherapeutic approach to voice work may be understood to reconcile individuals to social processes and constraints, while her psycho-physical training methods have much in common with the strategies that Michel Foucault considers instrumental in the production of socially regulatory “docile bodies.” The Romantic privileging of nature over culture also leads Linklater to privilege body over mind and feeling over thinking, consequently privileging intuition and spontaneity over curiosity, scepticism and critical appraisal. Coupled with the “docile body,” this

perspective also favours the traditionally “feminine” aspects of the natural voice and submerges its feminist potential. Additionally, Linklater’s apotheosising of Shakespeare and the “western classics” feeds conformist, middle-class approaches to canonical texts. This analysis highlights a divergence between the theory and the practice of natural voice training: while appearing resistant to the dominant social discourse and individually empowering, the natural voice may in fact support middle-class hegemony, submerge individual agency, facilitate conservative theatrical performances, and inhibit feminist interpretations of (canonical) texts.

Kristin Linklater was born in Scotland in 1936. She trained as an actress at the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art (LAMDA), where she learnt voicework under Iris Warren. She returned subsequently to LAMDA between 1957 and 1963 to teach voice production as Warren’s assistant (Linklater *TT*, 10). In 1963, Linklater moved to the United States and built a career as a prominent voice practitioner.

Linklater’s career has been balanced between academic and professional domains. In 1965, she offered her first training programme for voice teachers in New York, funded by the Rockefeller Foundation. She was Master Teacher of Voice at New York University from 1966 to 1978, while also working with: the Open Theater; the Negro Ensemble Company; the Festival Theatre, Stratford, Ontario; the Guthrie Theatre; the Manhattan Project; the Lincoln Centre Repertory Company; the Royal Shakespeare Company; and Broadway shows. In 1974, Linklater established The Working Theater in New York to train teachers in an integrated approach to voice, movement and acting, funded by grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Ford, Rockefeller and Mellon Foundations. In 1977, with Tina Packer, Linklater founded Shakespeare & Company in Lenox, Massachusetts, and subsequently became Director of Training. Her students included Richard Dreyfuss, Sigourney Weaver, Andre Gregory, Andie McDowell and Keanu Reeves. Linklater was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1981, which enabled her to follow her own interests in Shakespearean performance. During that period, she took many stage roles in Shakespeare productions and Broadway shows, and also served as a private voice coach to such actors as Bill Murray, Mikhail Baryshnikov and Donald Sutherland. Linklater’s theatre work extended to feminist performance. In 1990, Linklater

cofounded with Carol Gilligan² The Company of Women, an all-female Shakespeare company and theatre camp for girls, with which she is still involved. From 1991 to 1997 Linklater was Head of Voice at Emerson College, Boston, and, since 1997, she has been Chair of the Graduate Theatre Division of the School of the Arts at Columbia University, New York, where she teaches voice, text and Shakespeare. Linklater has been awarded the Association for Theatre in Higher Education and New England Theatre Conference Career Achievement Awards and, in 2001, was inducted into the College of Fellows of the American Theatre.

During her forty year career, Linklater has emerged as one of the world's most significant voice teachers. Her influence has become ubiquitous and hegemonic. Linklater has served as a Master Teacher of Voice Production for actors in theatre training programmes in Canada, Italy, Germany, New Zealand, Russia, Australia, Holland and Wales, as well as in many locations throughout the United States, and her former students may be found in most of the prominent universities and conservatories throughout the world.

Linklater is known best for her voice training programme, the "Linklater vocal technique for actors," outlined in her book *Freeing the Natural Voice* (1976), an enormously influential voice text which has shaped conventional methods of voice training for actors for the past generation. In the theatrical context, Linklater's programme is designed to prepare actors for a wide range of theatre, but it is most applicable to classical theatre, particularly Shakespearean performance. Fundamentally, her method helps stage actors avoid the perennial problem of developing vocal strain while expressing strong emotion, but it also places an enormous emphasis on privileging the *natural* over the aesthetic. *Freeing the Natural Voice* is key reading for most Anglo-American actor training programmes, and also appears on the recommended reading lists of most of the major Speech and Drama

² Carol Gilligan (born 1936) is a feminist social psychologist, educator, author and academic. She holds a PhD in Social Psychology from Harvard, and was a member of the Harvard faculty for 30 years. She now holds a professorial position in the School of Law at New York University. Gilligan is a pioneer in gender studies, being known particularly for her work regarding the psychological and moral development of women and girls. She is the author of *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (1982), which argues that women have different moral and psychological tendencies from men. *In a Different Voice* was an influence for Linklater's *Freeing Shakespeare's Voice*. Gilligan's recent research includes the development of the "Listening Guide Method" a voice-centred, relational guide to understanding the world. In developing this approach, Gilligan and her associates collaborated with voice teachers experienced in working in theatre. The method studies voice and resonance, and uses literary, clinical and feminist ways of listening to people as they describe a relationship that they have experienced. In 1996, *Time* magazine voted Gilligan one of America's 25 most influential people.

external examination bodies, giving her work a global reach.³ Many of Linklater's key ideas, especially those related to the speaking of Shakespearean text, are reinforced in her popular complementary text, *Freeing Shakespeare's Voice* (1992). Although I shall consider both texts, my primary focus will be upon *Freeing the Natural Voice*: its content, informing ideology, and the implications of the training programme for performance.

Linklater's aim in writing *Freeing the Natural Voice* is to "present a lucid view of the voice in the general context of human communication, and to provide a series of exercises to free, develop and strengthen the voice – first as a human instrument, then as the human *actor's* instrument" (*FNV*, 1). She explains that her approach is designed to "liberate the natural voice," rather than to "develop a vocal technique" (1). Linklater's method is characterised by its consistent emphasis on the *self*, which establishes an intimate connection between voicework and self-knowledge. Her approach is based on the paradigmatic assumptions that everyone has a voice capable of expressing whatever mood or feelings he or she chooses, but that habitual psychological and physical tensions prevent the natural voice from being released effectively and lead to distorted communication. Consequently, Linklater proposes a psycho-physical scheme of work to help us eradicate these negative habits and develop new, positive habits, which restore our capacity to respond to primary impulses.

Linklater defines the "natural voice" as "a voice in direct contact with the emotional impulse, shaped by the intellect but not inhibited by it" (1). Linklater's "natural voice" is "transparent – revealing, not describing, inner impulses of emotion or thought, directly and spontaneously" (2). She claims that, through liberating the natural voice, "[t]he person is heard, not the person's voice," and "[t]o free the voice is to free the person" (2). Ostensibly, her exercises are *deconstructive*, designed to strip away harmful and repressive social accretions to retrieve something purer, deeper and more "real." Linklater believes that, in so doing, we will gain access to transcendent "truths." This notion of an individuated, transcendent self implicitly entails an evasion of the social.

³ These examining bodies include: Trinity College London, the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, The London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art, and the London College of Music and Media. Through these organisations, Linklater's influence extends to over half a million examination candidates in almost 60 countries.

Linklater's approach works largely by developing physical awareness through specific relaxation, with a constant emphasis on the mind-body unity. She explains that "the attitude toward speaking in this book illustrates the relationship between emotion, instinctive impulse, sensory response, physical and vocal action" (187), completed by an intellect that moulds those elements into shapes that have sense and meaning. By practising the exercises, the actor dissolves his or her physical, psychological and emotional blocks, and knots of tension undo to release trapped energy, galvanising psycho-physical connections that, through socialisation, have fallen into desuetude, thus improving awareness and potential mobility.

The format of *Freeing the Natural Voice* is user-friendly, with a careful logical arrangement and strong practical focus. The language is clear and accessible, designed for the practitioner rather than the scholar. To this end, Linklater encourages visualisation and favours imagery over technical description in her attempt to explain the complex configurations and processes of voice production and human psychology, being particularly cautious of any "dangerously analytical description[s] of [...] process[es] that can only work spontaneously" (*FNV*, 162). For example, in one step of an exercise designed to develop mental intensity without the by-product of physical tension, Linklater instructs students to produce a series of quick, central, panting breaths, followed by a sigh of relief. She explains the process figuratively, urging students to "imagine that the diaphragm is a trampoline slung from the bottom edges of the rib cage. Picture the sound as a little person bouncing up and down in the middle of the trampoline [...] Bounce he/she 6 or 7 times, then let the person on the trampoline take a flying leap out of your mouth and across the room" (134). Similarly, during rib awareness and intercostal stretching exercises to aid breathing power, Linklater suggests that students picture the widened rib cage as "an opened umbrella" (125), and, during an exercise to develop the throat as a free channel for sound, she uses the metaphor of a "traffic jam corner" (78) to describe a pharynx obstructed by a lazy soft palate and tense tongue. To encourage the feeling of vocal sound as emanating from the centre of the body, Linklater urges students to conceive of "a wide chasm between your front and your back. At the bottom of the chasm there is a warm pool of vibrations. Release vibrations from the pool up through the chasm like a geyser: 'haaaaaaaaaa'" (79). Moreover, she encourages students to "colour" the vibrations "blue" (80), because "[t]he use of colours helps initially to bring some life into the sound" (81).

This mode of description and explanation may be considered either beneficial or problematic. On the one hand, the approach aids the student's general psycho-physical awareness by expressing unfamiliar processes in terms that he or she recognises. Through visualisation, the unseen interior of the body becomes more accessible to the student and, consequently, the student is more inclined to trust his or her own body, which is essential to Linklater's method. The arresting imagery functions as an effective mnemonic device; for example, the student is more likely to remember a person on a trampoline than an involved explanation of the workings of the diaphragm, intercostals and abdominal muscles. Without being encumbered by too many scientific facts, the student may concentrate more immediately on the given task. Thus, through imagery, the student understands the concepts more clearly, learns the processes more quickly, responds more readily, and progresses more successfully.

Conversely, by couching descriptions and explanations in her rather arbitrary imagery, Linklater runs the risk of compromising the clarity of her text and verging too far into the abstract. The nature and the pervasiveness of her images lends her work an esoteric quality, because the student understands and interprets only the symbols without a thorough comprehension of the concrete physiological referents on which they are based. Subsequently, the student may be denied a full understanding of and use of the body, which inhibits his or her psycho-physical awareness. The changeable character of the images may also be disconcerting and may hinder understanding. For example, after using the "pool of vibrations" as the basis for a series of breathing and resonance exercises, Linklater encourages students to gain new stimulus for their breathing centre by doing the sequence again with a new image behind it. "[T]his time imagine the throat widening down into the chest as an old fashioned chimney widening down into a fireplace. In the big, old-fashioned fireplace there is a large fire warming you in your middle. Picture yourself sitting in a comfortable armchair beside the fire, feeling relaxed and warm. Let the warmth of the fire and your feeling of contentment release on a deep, warm 'haaaa' all the way up and out of the chimney" (88-9). Accordingly, if the diaphragm is sometimes a trampoline, sometimes a pool at the bottom of a chasm, and at other times a fire in an old-fashioned fireplace, then this kind of inconsistent visualising might obstruct specific psycho-physical perception.

Furthermore, Linklater's imagery serves to deflect critical attention from her teaching. If the student disagrees with a concept or a process, its accuracy or its result, then that difference may be excused as the student's misinterpretation of the metaphor. This makes it more difficult for students to question the system. Combined, these strategies facilitate an uneven power dynamic in the classroom, in which the teacher retains the bulk of the knowledge and the student remains in a position of dependence, working only with the information dispensed by the teacher, and with limited ability to explore the concepts independently.

Freeing the Natural Voice is divided into four main sections. The first, "The Freeing Process," is designed to help people develop an ability to perceive habits and register new experiences, and to achieve a basic psycho-physical awareness in relation to the vocal apparatus. Linklater identifies breath as the "source of sound" (25), so concentrates on postural alignment and breathing exercises as a basis for creating and releasing sound. The student is encouraged to experience sound from a *tactile* rather than an aural perspective, *feeling* the sound as vibrations that emanate from his or her physical and psychological "centre." Subsequent exercises focus on liberating the vocal channel through which the breath-induced sound travels, specifically the throat, and the tongue and jaw muscles.

The second section, "The Developing Process," describes Linklater's first stage of vocal development: range. Overall, Linklater aims for a more developed psycho-physical awareness in the student in order to generate greater expressiveness, depth, and more specific emotion. This is approached chiefly by optimising the vibrations of sound through an exploration of the different resonators. Linklater's resonance exercises target the "vocal defence network," the process whereby mental cross-currents produce defensive muscle responses that block access to certain resonating chambers and divert vibrations into others. These blocks check the primary resonating response and place reliance upon secondary responses that convey veiled messages (98). Linklater's exercises concentrate on breaking down the vocal defence network through relaxation, and through the connection of thought and feeling with breath, vibration and resonating impulse.

The third section, "Sensitivity and Power," further develops the voice through an exploration of power. Here, Linklater advocates breath capacity and control linked with the inner energy impulse as the key to powerful, sensitive communication, and her exercises concentrate on synthesising voice and emotion. Later, Linklater provides

exercises to free the articulatory organs, placing a particular focus on precision and energy. In conventional voice texts, the section on articulation (or diction) generally represents the transition from voice (the vibrations of sound) to speech (the sound cut, modified and moulded by the organs of articulation and turned into words). Linklater's articulation exercises remain largely in the realm of voice, with little application to actual words or phrases; for example, students do not progress beyond repeating combinations such as: "mm-ey mm-ey mm-ey" (148), "buh-duh-guh-duh" (153), "muh-nuh-nguh-nuh" (154), "zzzzee zzzzey zzzzaaa" (156). This approach retains an emphasis on "pure" voice, the body, feeling and imagery, rather than on speech, the mind, listening and text.

Linklater takes students into the realm of words in the final, briefest, section of *Freeing the Natural Voice*, which focuses primarily on applying the natural voice to text and acting. In this series of exercises, the emphasis is upon taking words back to their physical and emotional sources; immersing oneself in the intricacies, subtleties, implications and layers of the language of the text being spoken. The chief emphasis is upon feeling over thinking and image over text, which functions to transport the text from the literary to theatrical, from idea to "spirit." Strangely, given the emphasis on a "natural" and somewhat transcendent voice and self, Linklater chooses to concentrate solely upon the highly constructed language of Shakespeare, because she believes that "acting Shakespeare has special rewards for his particular challenge" (189), and so most actors aspire to play roles from his plays.

Given the structure and emphases of Linklater's method, what does the "natural voice" sound like? *Prima facie*, it may appear difficult to generalise about the sound of the natural voice because of Linklater's emphasis on the individual. Supposedly, every "natural voice" would be unique. Despite the fact that each human voice has its idiosyncratic qualities, or its "grain" as Roland Barthes calls it (*IMT*, 188-89), an examination of Linklater's text, coupled with my own experience of her work, reveals many parameters within which the natural voice is constructed. For example, although Linklater is concerned to point out that, unlike elocution, the natural voice does not cultivate any particular accent, she writes that "any accent will be modified by freeing the voice" (191). This modification tends towards a homogenising neutrality, which limits dialectal diversity and functions to "naturally remove the limiting stamp of regionality" (191).

Natural voice training encourages certain qualities of voice. The natural voice is not shrill, nasal or constricted. The breath that is the source of sound for the natural voice is produced from the diaphragm, a whole chest breathing that has its base at the centre of the body. Because of the increased lung capacity and greater support from the diaphragm, abdominal and intercostal muscles, the sound is stronger, steadier and more easily sustained. Due to the relaxation of the vocal channel and the subsequent improved functioning of the resonators, the voice tends to be slightly deeper, with an open, resonant tone.

The focus on the relationship between pitch and resonance produces greater harmonics and a wider pitch range. The vowels produced from the more open, resonant voice sound rounder, richer and more musical. The emphasis on primary impulses and the connection between mind and body engenders a sense of the voice emanating from the centre of the body and incorporating more of the body, rather than being placed in the throat or residing behind the mask of the face. The voice is produced with ease, connection to emotions seems simpler and more direct, more areas of the “self” seem accessible, and expressive communication is easier, without the effort or repressive emotional censoring usually involved. The natural voice, then, is free, spontaneous, “primary” and reflexive, releases a sonorous, clear, supported, uninhibited sound, and is in harmony with self and other.

Linklater, then, holds very specific ideas about what is meant by “natural.” For Linklater, the presumption of “natural” is that it is “neutral,” an unadulterated, impartial voice on to which a theatrical role may be imposed. Indeed, the natural voice does approach a kind of neutrality in that it is centred, balanced, content, free of any obvious gender bias, and geographically unspecific. But this very neutrality is invested with certain ideological assumptions and has interesting – even contradictory – effects. For example, if “to free the voice is to free the person” (2), what does this amount to? If one acquires a natural voice, does one also become a “natural person”? If “natural” equals “neutral” of a sort, does it produce “neutral” people? What sorts of performances might “neutral” people create? The equation of “neutral” with “natural” is also problematised by the significant effort involved in attaining and maintaining that neutrality. Linklater’s training programme, during which students change their existing voices through hard work and practice, then work consistently to maintain those new voices, implies that the natural voice is something that does not seem to us immediately to be natural. Linklater emphasises that, “in our perception of our own

voices there is a vital difference to be observed between what is 'natural' and what is 'familiar'" (1), and advises:

I would remind you that these movements and sounds are designed to help recondition your whole way of communicating and that such reconditioning takes time and constant reprogramming before it sticks and the communicating process forms reliable new habits. Old habits and daily tension fight hard to be retained and these exercises are for daily use until the actor retires or decides to open a candy store or raise hogs instead of struggling with theatre. (94)

Linklater's presumption of neutrality is further complicated by the claims she makes about the natural voice providing access to essential or transcendent "truths." This concept carries numerous complementary connotations, particularly the equation of "natural" with an asocial or presocial pastoral innocence, which Linklater associates with animals, children, freedom and purity.

Therefore, it seems fair to suggest that the "natural voice" is not straightforward, neutral and innocuous, but is as politicised and constructed as any other kind of voice. Linklater's natural voice in theory and practice may be better understood by an analysis of the socio-historical, political, philosophical and aesthetic trends that inform the content of *Freeing the Natural Voice*, in order to elucidate some of the ideological assumptions implicit in her approach.

Taking a broad perspective, in writing *Freeing the Natural Voice*, Linklater is influenced by significant aesthetic, philosophical and social movements emergent in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Three of these trends in particular impacted upon the training of the stage voice in England and the United States during the twentieth century, and converged and came into sharper focus during the 1960s. These were: voice science, Romanticism and psychologism. All three of these trends are manifest in Linklater's work. Linklater's method is influenced by the ever-developing interest in science and the voice. During the nineteenth century, alongside more general advances in science and medicine, doctors and scientists developed an increasingly detailed knowledge of the physiology of the vocal tract. Their discoveries were aided, to a significant extent, by Manuel Garcia's invention of the laryngoscope, which revealed the precise working of the vocal folds. Subsequently, the subject of vocal anatomy and physiology was gradually added to the curricula of common schools, academies and universities. The study of vocal physiology and the sound of the human voice was complemented and advanced by the creation of the International

Phonetic Alphabet, intended as a notational standard for the phonetic representation of all languages, and devised by British and French phoneticians under the auspices of the International Phonetic Association in 1886. During the early twentieth century, some pioneering voice teachers applied this knowledge to their own work with actors. Significantly, Linklater's in-depth holistic approach to voice training is dependent upon a precise knowledge of physical mechanics of the body and voice. Linklater acknowledges that her approach to voice training has "grown with an era that has revealed more and more about human functioning" and refers to the work of forerunners Elsie Fogerty and Iris Warren in advancing the "science of voice production" (*FNV*, 2).

Linklater's interest in "nature," "freedom" and "the natural," along with her resistance to aestheticised standardisation, grounds her approach in Romantic philosophy. In the theatrical context, the Romantic stage of the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century contested the tenets of the formal rhetorical tradition. Theatre practitioners such as Garrick and Macklin in England, Goethe and Schiller in Germany, and Voltaire and Hugo in France, asserted that language was better served by passion and natural expression than by strict codes of conduct and speaking, and sought a closer relationship with nature in the theatrical arts (Kimbrough, 13, 15). Their position displays a marked similarity with Linklater, who evinces an overt resistance to the concept of elocution, denouncing the trained or "polite" voice as oppressive, representative of regnant social values, and (therefore) deceptive. Although, arguably, Linklater's "natural voice" is a "trained" voice, she asserts that:

Elocution flourished in the nineteenth century, a period when the unacceptable realities of emotional and psychological turmoil were well hidden under the disguise of manners and social style (171) [...] I find a well-trained voice hard to trust because it implies a well-trained person who knows how he or she wants to be perceived and can achieve what is desired. A person who has enough control to present a consistently "pleasant" tone of voice is hiding many things. (97)

Linklater's "natural" voice is designed to reveal a "real" person, who tends away from a socialised, civilised, intellectualised being. Linklater's approbation of nature and negation of the social is evident in her claim that our inability to communicate freely arises from tensions we acquire "through living in this world" (*FNV*, 1), and that "our true voices have been tamed, confined within the bounds of twentieth century behaviour" (*FSV*, 6). Sarah Werner asserts that Linklater's "emphasis on freeing the

self is related to the belief that through voicework one can access a deeper, more primitive, and more innocent self that is healthier both for personal life and for life as an actor" (*PS*, 250). According to Richard Eldridge, this emphasis on transcendency and resistance to mediocrisation implies a Romantic self, in which individual experiences and reflections are taken to exemplify general human possibilities of an accession to meaningfulness (1).

Specifically, I would argue that Linklater espouses a Rousseauesque philosophy. As with Rousseau, "nature" is one of Linklater's most pervasive themes. Most obviously, Rousseau's concept of "natural goodness" – that human beings are by nature good, but are perverted and corrupted by society (Dent, 174; Rousseau *TSC*, I, 49) – strongly informs Linklater's voice training ethos. For instance, Linklater makes repeated reference to the Rousseauesque belief in a primitive character of communication that will return us to a childlike innocence that precedes the corruption of civilisation:

[W]e often devise games that will bring us back, as actors, to a childlike state where the imagination has no critic to restrain it, where instinct and intuition are uncontaminated by the fear of judgment. Creativity grows best in the garden of innocence; we have to invent the means to give us back the freedom we lost when we left childhood behind. (*Vox*, 24)

Likewise, Rousseau's "utopian view" finds expression in Linklater's assertions that by developing our intact nature we can find a place for ourselves in society without suffering alienation, nor the personal corruption or pain that this involves. Chiefly, this may be achieved by the recognition and development of "natural passions" (instruments of our freedom that preserve us) and the identification and elimination of "alien passions" (those that come from elsewhere and which we appropriate to the detriment of nature) (Dent, 175; Rousseau *Émile*, IV, 212-13). Accordingly, Linklater focuses on the concept of "freedom," which is also central to Rousseau's social and political thought. Rousseau proposes this particular notion of freedom:

It is a commonplace that our ability and opportunity to carry out our intended acts can be hampered or constrained by, for example, external obstacles, lack of resources or inadequate skills. All of these limit our freedom, our scope to do what we intend, or it pleases us, to do it. To increase individual freedom in this sense is simply to reduce or remove obstacles, or to increase relevant resources, knowledge, skills and so on. This kind of freedom is sometimes called "negative" freedom, when it involves taking away constraints or limitations (negations of freedom) thereby enabling a person more amply and successfully to express his ideas and intentions in action. (Dent, 118)

Linklater proposes almost identical problems and solutions, with a focus on internal obstacles:

The natural voice is most perceptibly blocked and distorted by physical tension, but it also suffers from emotional blocks, intellectual blocks, aural blocks, spiritual blocks. All such obstacles are psycho-physical in nature, and once they are removed the voice is able to communicate the full range of human emotion and all the nuances of thought. (FNV, 2)

The interest in psycho-physical training is apparent in the work of other twentieth century theatre practitioners, for example: Stanislavski's "psycho-technique" later developed by Michael Chekhov (Merlin, 4); Frederick Alexander's "Alexander Technique"; Arnold Wolfsohn's work with the Roy Hart Theatre (Martin, 64-72); the voicework of post-war practitioners Iris Warren and Michel Saint-Denis (Martin, 175); and Jerzy Grotowski, whose concept of *via negativa* encapsulates the essence of Linklater's strategy. In *Voice in Modern Theatre*, Jacqueline Martin writes that *via negativa* is "the most important aspect of Grotowski's discoveries about training the voice: learning to release psycho-physical blocks rather than trying to force the 'natural' voice to learn unnatural techniques" (72). Grotowski explains:

[I]t is not a matter of learning new things, but rather ridding oneself of old habits [...] The actor must discover those resistances and obstacles which hinder him in his creative task. Thus the exercises become a means of overcoming these personal impediments. The actor no longer asks himself: 'How can I do this?' Instead he must know what *not* to do, what obstructs him. By a personal adaptation of the exercises, a solution must be found for the elimination of these obstacles which vary for each individual actor. This is what I mean by *via negativa*: a process of elimination. (TPT, 96, 101)

Linklater draws directly upon Grotowski's methods in her goal of achieving a mutually beneficial interdependence of a free voice and free emotions. For example, in one exercise to liberate the vocal channel, she notes: "We took the *via negativa* in working on the jaw and the tongue: remove tension in order to allow something to happen" (FNV, 71).

Linklater's reference to psycho-physical blocks is emblematic of the third trend, psychologism, specifically the branches of psychoanalysis and psychotherapy. In Linklater's methodology, the psychotherapeutic approach suggests itself as the means by which her Romantic goals might be achieved. As a treatment modality, psychotherapy has its origins in Freud's psychoanalytic work from the beginning of

the twentieth century; however, Linklater is most strongly influenced by the results of Iris Warren's research with psychologists, which extends to a more detailed application of psychotherapy for voicework. Characteristics of Freudian psychotherapy, such as a concern with the modification of learned behaviours; the identification and mitigation of inner resistances to change; freedom from repression; the advocacy of a patient-centred, collaborative style of therapy; and the tendency to construct the individual consciousness as presocial,⁴ are strongly evident in Linklater's preoccupation with freedom through the identification and change of learned habits, and the alleviation of socio-psychological repressions through her voice work. Linklater writes that:

In the psycho-therapeutic context the voice has been neglected, and apart from screaming primally and talking endlessly, little has been done to free it from its prison of environmental influence, unconscious psycho-physical conditioning and aesthetic standardisation. (*FNV*, 4)

Linklater's especial focus on psychotherapeutic voice training appears, to some degree, to segregate voicework from other aspects of the acting craft. Indeed, as Richard Knowles points out, "pure" voice training seems in Linklater to become a therapeutic end in itself (100), "unencumbered," as Linklater says, "by external material such as words" (*FNV*, 193).

These eighteenth and nineteenth century trends have especial relevance for Linklater's voice work because they enjoyed a revival at the time when Linklater was formulating her voice training methodology. Science, Romanticism and psychologism converged and became particularly prominent in the decade of the 1960s, re-emerging in a period of social and political transformation and liberation, and contributing to a socio-historical and aesthetic environment in which new methods of voice training arose. Changes in voice training reflected the particular emphasis on the self, and the encouragement to open "the Pandora's box of the psyche" and "say what we like about ourselves" (*FNV*, 172). The stage voice represented the more democratic theatrical aesthetic brought about by social mobility; it no longer needed to conform to the strictures of elocution and the demands of the "voice beautiful," but was required to express "real" emotion, favouring "naturalness" and "truth" over "beauty" and "artificiality."

⁴ For more information, see: Freud, *Collected Works*, Vol. 1: 267; Hadfield, 131; Knowles, 99-100; and Strupp, 4-5.

Many of these ideological and social forces coalesced in the work of director Peter Brook, who established himself as an influential cultural and theatrical impresario during this period. Brook believed that people's natural instincts were crippled from birth because of the conditioning of a warped society, so, in his work with the Royal Shakespeare Company, he resisted artificiality and favoured neutral, open, exploratory rehearsal processes. His ideas, applied to voice training, are strongly apparent in Linklater's work, along with the work of fellow voice practitioners Cicely Berry and Patsy Rodenburg. Subsequently, their publications have been dubbed "the post-Brook school of voice texts."⁵

These veins of influence, particularly Romanticism and psychotherapy, endow Linklater's "natural" vocal technique for actors with a particular ideology. Although this ideology is not advocated explicitly, it is implicit throughout *Freeing the Natural Voice* and *Freeing Shakespeare's Voice*. Paradoxically, despite Linklater's apparent anti-establishment sentiments and her socially provocative agenda, Linklater's informing ideology is (un)comfortably middle-class.⁶ There are two chief reasons why. First, Linklater's individuating focus is premised on the discovery and development of a coherent humanist subject. Such an activity entails a desire for self-actualisation, which is only possible once one's basic needs have been satisfied, and so feeds middle-class interests, assumptions and concerns. In a more recent reflection on her work, Linklater evinces a certain anxiety about her politics when she acknowledges that:

We – we privileged few – have been relieved enough of our external survival needs to be free to focus on internal survival and something which has come to be called "human growth" [...] The "human growth movement" of the past twenty years focuses on release from psychophysical adversity, emphasising the benefits of emotional and psychological freedom in achieving a fully lived life. This goal would be immorally self-centred did it not include the notion that the purpose of growing as a human being must be to look at and listen to the whole human condition with increased understanding and compassion and, in the

⁵ For example, see Martin, *Voice in Modern Theatre*; Knowles, "Shakespeare, Voice and Ideology" in *Shakespeare, Theory, and Performance*.

⁶ Although in contemporary academic criticism the term "middle-class" is somewhat dated, I will use it to describe Linklater's ideology because Linklater is writing from the perspective of late 1960s thought. In the British cultural context of the 1960s, the middle class existed as a very visible and pertinent entity, and established itself in the class-conscious area of voice training in the post-elocution era. It is not surprising, therefore, to find middle-class assumptions and objectives in Linklater's writing and training methods.

case of the artist, to shed an ever brighter light on the causes of humanity's more egregious errors. (*TT*, 10-1)

Interestingly, Linklater's disclaimer is equally revealing: the ability to show compassion for the human condition and to enlighten others is a predominantly middle-class privilege or presumption.

Second, Linklater makes much of the balance in the individual that occurs as a result of finding one's "natural self." She writes: "Perfect communication for the actor implies a balanced quartet of intellect and emotion, body and voice – a quartet in which no one instrument compensates with its strength for the weakness of the other" (*FNV*, 4). This concept of balance is a Romantic notion, related to the desire to attain a state of equilibrium with nature. Eldridge notes that the composure and balance that ensues as the outcome of the isolate imagination's encounter with nature serves not the interests of people in general, but the sectarian interests of the middle class (7). Contemporary Romanticism's evasion of the social and retreat back to nature may be read as a suppression of the political, advocating spiritual quietism as opposed to the militancy of overt political action. Barrell explains that:

The notion of balance, as something which proceeds from a position beyond the political, is in fact a thoroughly political notion. That position, a middle point between and above all merely partial and particular situations, bears a close resemblance to a certain ideal construction of the middle-class – neither aristocratic nor vulgar, neither reactionary nor progressive. (Barrell, 5-6)

In this way, Romantic transcendence aids the middle class in its struggle for hegemony by acknowledging and then retreating from social problems, thus accommodating the individual to dominant social structures. The notion of Linklater herself, her aims and her target audience as being middle-class now becomes central to my subsequent analysis.

Foremost, these conclusions raise the question of why, if Linklater is a middle-class voice practitioner, with a middle-class vocal pedagogy that is representative of existing trends, influences and discourses, she is worth considering at all in this context. What makes Linklater interesting? I would argue that Linklater is noteworthy because her system repackages and integrates various ideas and ideologies into a single method; because of her specific claims to the "natural"; and because of her immense popularity, which has led to her work with some of the most influential Anglo-American theatre companies and actor training institutions. Therefore, in

undertaking this analysis I am interrogating a dominant – and largely uncriticised – way of working within the discourse of voice training and vocal pedagogy. (I also do not wish to subscribe to the (middle-class) presumption that middle-class is necessarily boring.)

In performing this analysis, I shall draw upon my practical experience as both a student and teacher of Linklater's natural voice method, but shall also make significant reference to her printed texts. Linklater attempts to avoid the latter kind of scrutiny by claiming that her work should never have been written down; however, in his article, "Shakespeare, Voice and Ideology," Richard Knowles provides a justification for critiquing printed material of this type:

It may seem unfair to interrogate printed texts written by voice coaches and teachers rather than the methods they employ in their studios and rehearsal halls, but I would argue that these books⁷ have had major influence independent of their authors' and others' authorised application of their techniques, and that *as* texts, these books encode and reinforce ideological structures and assumptions that are both deeply embedded in theatrical discourse and too easily overlooked or mystified when their methods are applied in practice. (Knowles, 93)

Indeed, it is the rhetorical frameworks surrounding each set of exercises (which practitioners tend to skip) that contain the major ideological viewpoints, which are then reinforced by exercises that have a predetermined outcome. Considering that, like most actors and voice tutors, my practical experience of Linklater's method is based directly on the training programme described in her published texts, it is important to interrogate Linklater's published scheme of work to consider the implications it carries for performances produced by the "natural" voice.

All voice texts, it could be argued, are informed by some kind of ideology, if only because of the close relationships between voice and personal and social identity; voice, language and thought; voice and social power; and voice and prevailing political and aesthetic trends. However, if the author lays claim to a "natural" voice, then the surface implication is that there is no ideology. "Natural" is a difficult concept to critique because it has positive connotations of legitimacy, authenticity and beauty, and of having a basis in the normal constitution of things. Constructing "natural" in this way establishes a dichotomy, in which anything not deemed to be

⁷ By "these books," Knowles refers specifically to the texts of Kristin Linklater, Cicely Berry and Patsy Rodenburg. The "Big Three" of contemporary Anglo-American voice training are often discussed as a triumvirate.

“natural” falls into the opposite category of “unnatural,” with attendant negative connotations of artificiality, anomaly, perversity, ugliness and even brutality. As such, characterising a method as “natural” (initially) evades interrogation, and limits possibilities for pursuing “unnatural” performances that might question conventional practices and assumptions.

Linklater’s text claims implicitly to provide a neutral and universal set of tools that will be useful to all actors in all situations, but *Freeing the Natural Voice* and *Freeing Shakespeare’s Voice* can be read as cultural productions that do particular kinds of ideological work, making voices “free” not in fact for “any speech activity,” but really only within a particularly circumscribed range. Linklater’s work, in practice, may engender effects that are not anticipated by her agenda. I suggest that, although natural voice training appears to represent a critique of society, being a response to the repressive structures and processes of everyday life, it in fact serves to maintain the societal status quo; therefore, the agenda may be individualising, but the effect is homogenising. Linklater’s bourgeois ideology, founded in Romantic ideals and fuelled by psychotherapeutic strategies, affects not only her goals but her methods of training. I propose that Linklater’s voice training method produces a compliant voice, which I further characterise as a *feminine* voice. The performances produced by this “natural” voice are limited to those that are conservative and culturally affirmative, and which restrict the potential for radical, marginalised or socially provocative performances. Hegemonic “natural voice” performances are especially limiting in the case of feminist performance, particularly feminist performances of canonical works, principally Shakespeare. This outcome is assisted by Linklater’s own construction of the feminine, which, in contradiction to her identification as a feminist, tends towards culturally entrenched, middle-class stereotypes of women and femininity. The remainder of this chapter is concerned with an analysis of the specific ways in which Linklater’s methods result in conservative, hegemonic performances. Accordingly, I will unpack her bourgeois ideology, paying particular attention to her Romantic philosophy and psychotherapeutic approach.

To begin with, Linklater’s middle-class ideology facilitates hegemonic performances because whichever emotion is being conveyed by the voice of the Linklater-trained actor, it will be, at base, a centred, “comfortable” sound, because it emanates from a self-realised person who is at ease physically and psychologically. Thus, even in moments of extreme passion, the natural voice will never be resolutely

a voice of unrest or distress, nor will it be a provocative voice of cultural resistance with the capacity to truly disturb the societal status quo, because it is the product of a body and psyche that is content, and regulated within a hegemonic framework. Linklater's voice therapy comprises its own kind of "talking cure," whereby the actor frees the self through voice training by an apparent rejection of society's repressive influences and extant structures. As with conventional therapy, Linklater takes everyday life as the root cause of our problems. However, therapy is a rehabilitative and reintegratory process. The individual undertakes therapy, conventionally, to normalise, to rid himself or herself of aberrant ideas, compulsions or neuroses that prevent him or her from functioning "normally" or fitting into "normal" society; post-therapy, societal influences no longer seem so oppressive, the structures no longer so daunting or constricting. It could be argued that the talking cure is complete when the patient starts saying the "right" sort of things in the "right" sort of way. For example, in a recent article on her work, "Thoughts on Theatre, Therapy and the Art of Voice," Linklater recalls an exercise near the beginning of her training programme. In this exercise, students are encouraged to relax and, lying with their eyes closed, describe the images that they visualise as a key to their states of mind. In one situation, a student described looking down into a cage full of vicious wild animals. Linklater made it her task to moderate the mental image, to help the student to tame those wild animals, to name them and to find the keys to their cages and, eventually, to help the image disappear (*TT*, 4). Thus conciliated, the student could move on with her training. Consequently, Linklater's methods fashion a compliant, reconciled self that exists comfortably within the structure of bourgeois society and values. If, as Linklater argues, the voice functions to reveal the person, "expressing [...] whatever gamut of emotion, complexity of mood and subtlety of thought he or she experiences" (*FNV*, 1), then the voice will inevitably reflect the actor's normalised position.

Linklater's middle-class ideology leads to hegemonic performances largely because of the way in which her psychotherapeutic approach enables students to achieve "freedom." Linklater's particular construction of "freedom" upholds her Romantic ideals. According to Linklater, freedom, for actors, will restore "natural" access to "self," giving them a psychological "depth" that puts them in touch with something that is at once their true (individual) selves and our common (universal) humanity (Knowles, 97). The psychotherapeutic methods focus chiefly on gaining access to a neuro-muscular state of receptiveness that will allow "organic" sensory

impulses to spring from the actor's psychological and physical "centre" to inform the text. Freedom becomes a form of surrender, with the main emphasis laid upon "letting go" of psychophysical resistances and blocks, and privileging instinctive and involuntary processes over conscious thought. Linklater discourages students from imposing their own ideas upon the work in favour of letting the work "reveal" itself to them, and regularly reminds students that results must happen, not be made to happen. It is common for students to receive the instruction: "Your exercise is to *do* nothing but allow a great deal to *happen* to you" (*FSV*, 35). Therefore, in attaining their physical and psychological "freedom," actors assume a position of compliance where mind is subordinated to body, and both are subordinated to the exercise or the text. This results, paradoxically in a kind of restraint, where actors' choices become circumscribed by dominant forces.

Chiefly, this kind of control over students is possible because of the focus on *individual* change, Linklater's *sine qua non* being the focus on the *self*. Linklater acknowledges that the forces that restrict vocal, physical and psychological expression can be social and external, but clearly advocates that it is the *person's* mind, body and habits that must change for liberation to be achieved, not society's. Although she does couch her work in political language, she ultimately backs away from political action and places responsibility for repression in the realm of the psychological. Thus, the emphasis remains on the individual's psychology rather than society's larger structures, resulting in an individual inured to his or her social context; in other words, a denial of the social serves ironically to reinforce the social. Granted, change within individuals might result in a bottom-up change for society, but this ideal is complicated by the aesthetic framework within which Linklater's method is located. Linklater outlines her position more explicitly in "Thoughts on Theatre." In her view, it is obvious that actors must succumb to personal change, taming their own monsters while coming to terms with the condition of contemporary society. Linklater writes:

If [...] the voice that tells the truth comes from deep inside, forged on the anvil of emotion, and if, as seems evident, the theatre of tomorrow even more than today must reflect an increasingly violent society if it is to remain useful, the actors whom we train must be able to conjure up their own psychological monsters, tame them, and train them to leap through hoops of fiery texts telling tales of horror that lead to redemption, destruction, or transmutation. For catharsis is still the mission of the theatre. (*TT*, 4)

This approach, arguably, creates actors who mirror society rather than question or change it. It is true that reflection can lead to change, but if catharses are effected by the converted (the healed telling the healing stories), then they generate a cycle of assimilation which reinforces the hegemonic discourse and submerges the actors' subjectivity and agency.

Accordingly, Linklater's middle-class ideology creates hegemonic performances through the kinds of catharses that are effected on stage. Because the character's psychology is foregrounded, the catharses of Linklater's theatre approximate the abreactions of psychoanalytic therapy, engendering a return to "normality." The actor influenced by Linklater's books will learn to

construct characters where psychological depths and difficulties will remain the focus of interest, and where psychological development, as a "return" to some universalist state of normalcy, will continue to provide cathartic reversals, recognitions, and closures for audiences who will leave the theatre with calm of mind, all passion spent. (Knowles, 106-07)

Natural voice productions, therefore, limit the change that catharsis can bring about, because they are affirming, rather than disconcerting. Sarah Werner considers this situation to be particularly problematic for the feminist actor, because

[T]his emphasis on psychological healing and the prioritisation of therapy over political action limits her ability to call attention to the politics in the text. This type of therapeutic catharsis built into voice work will continue to get in the way of a resistance to gender stereotypes that might be found in a playscript. Language that is organic and natural is not language that challenges societal structures. (PS, 251)

In a placatory article in *New Theatre Quarterly*, Jane Boston tries to mend differences between the academy and the conservatoire, suggesting that, "If the practitioner has utopian desires enabling self-aware, healthy, and assertive individuals to challenge establishment values, then his or her texts need clearly to articulate them" (251). Otherwise, she argues, the texts may be "misread" by academics who understand the authors' essentialism as a depoliticisation of voice work, distancing the actor from political action and naturalising the social order. In response, I suggest that Boston favours agenda to the detriment of effect; that is, she gives greater consideration to interpretations of the authors' theories, than to the effects of their work in practice.

I shall further my discussion of how Linklater's middle-class ideology creates hegemonic performances by considering Linklater's training methods in terms of

Foucault's notion of "docile bodies," outlined in *Discipline and Punish*. Although Foucault's ideas may not present an obvious theoretical frame for Linklater's work, they provide useful insights into the rationale, quality and results of her programme. Linklater's psycho-physical training methods encourage the production of "docile bodies," which limit the actor's capacity to question, resist, modify or "own" given interpretations of a text, and so are more likely to create hegemonic performances that support the status quo. I began thinking about "docile bodies" while working concurrently in two different areas of theatre: as a voice teacher and as a combat choreographer. Engaged in both voice training and martial arts training, I noticed the similarity of the two psycho-physical practices, which led me to draw connections between Foucault's description of disciplined, martial training for soldiers, and Linklater's highly prescriptive vocal technique for actors. Moreover, Foucault's theory is grounded in a late eighteenth century philosophical interest in the nature of the body, training and discipline. As such, it is contemporaneous with Linklater's other philosophical antecedents.

According to Foucault, "A body is a docile body that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved" (*DP*, 136). Docile bodies are produced within a system of discipline "not only so that they may do what one wishes, but so that they may operate as one wishes, with the techniques, the speed and the efficiency that one determines" (138). If, as seems evident, Linklater takes her students from one kind of psycho-physical posture and introduces, inculcates and hones another; if the point of the Linklater method in the aesthetic context is to render the actor neutral, an "empty space" into which the role is planted, along with a neutral voice to take on the required characters and express the required emotions; and if the actor becomes, essentially, a tool to carry out a task, then Foucault's "docile body" could indeed be an exemplar for Linklater's finished product. Within Linklater's system, anything that concerns the body automatically concerns the voice; therefore, to characterise Linklater-trained actors as "docile bodies" characterises the natural voice as a "docile voice."

Like the actor, Foucault writes that the soldier becomes something that can be *made*, "an inapt body, the machine required can be constructed; posture is gradually corrected; a calculated constraint runs slowly through each part of the body, mastering it, making it pliable, ready at all times, turning silently into the automatism of habit" (*DP*, 135). Importantly, when I use Foucault's term, "calculated constraint," I do not

mean a rigid tension, but rather a focusing on, and honing of, certain types of movement as opposed to others. Despite Linklater's privileging of freeing and relaxation, her method ineluctably involves calculated constraint. Psycho-physical training is selective and exclusionary; if the mind and body are trained to perform a certain process, then they perform that process at the expense of other possible processes. In the martial arts, for instance, if a student is trained to punch and kick in a particular way, eventually it no longer occurs to him or her to punch and kick in other ways. While Linklater's students free one part of the body, they place limits or parameters upon other parts. For example, to eschew the clavicular breathing that most of us have and to develop the diaphragmatic breathing that Linklater advocates, students must free the intercostal and abdominal muscles for greater ease of movement, but must, simultaneously, place new restrictions upon the movement of their shoulders. Overall, Linklater's "calculated constraint" develops "new habits of mind and muscle" (*FNV*, 142), and serves to make the actor pliable and readily prepared to perform the required task.

To this end, Linklater asks her students to train "the mind to reroute its messages and relabel the destinations of those messages" (62) over the course of several years. Linklater advises that, "You will be re-conditioning a way of communicating that has served you, for better or worse, all your life, so that to effect real change you must plan a daily session of at least an hour, over the period of at least a year. Also, realise that you are using your voice throughout the day, and that your exercises can be practised continually" (5). She stipulates that the training "should be undertaken with the knowledge that one year's work will bring understanding, the second will provide practice and assimilation, and the third will reveal results and changes that are so natural that the student forgets that anything was learned" (193).

Foucault writes of the body in this context as "an object and target of power [...] the body that is manipulated, shaped, trained, which obeys, responds, becomes skilful and increases its forces" (*DP*, 136). Linklater's pedagogical practice is congruent with Foucault's description of training methods that are productive of docile bodies. The structure of Linklater's system comprises specific exercises organised carefully into a logical progression, with each exercise dissected into several graded steps. She includes regular "workouts" to recapitulate, clarify and reinforce the information, and to provide an opportunity for assessment before

advancing to the next stage. Foucault explains that the discipline of training docile bodies involves:

[A]rranging different stages [...] drawing up programmes, each of which must take place during a particular stage and which involves exercises of increasing difficulty; qualifying individuals according to the way in which they progress through these series. [...] A whole analytical pedagogy was being formed, meticulous in its detail (it broke down the subject being taught into its simplest elements, it hierarchised each stage of development into small steps). (DP, 159)

The precise arrangement of information and activities, and the detail with which they are delineated, exerts significant control over Linklater's students, limiting their ability to diverge from the course of instruction, and ensuring that they are fully habituated to the system.

Foucault identifies three aspects related to the production of docile bodies that are pertinent to an understanding of Linklater's training ethos: the scale of control; the object of control; and the training modality. The scale of the control operates at the level of each individual body, "exercising upon it a subtle coercion, of obtaining holds upon it at the level of the mechanism itself – movements, gestures, attitudes, rapidity: an infinitesimal power over the active body" (136-37). Largely, it is the *detail* of Linklater's psycho-physical scheme of work that aids the production of docile bodies/docile voices. Linklater's work abandons the traditional preoccupation with social veneer, accent and the "head," and exerts a control over the whole organic mechanism of the body, with a focus, depth and specificity unprecedented in voice training.

In the training of docile bodies, the object of control is not the signifying elements of behaviour or the language of the body, but "the economy, the efficiency of movements, their internal organisation; constraint bears upon the forces rather than upon the signs; the only truly important ceremony is that of exercise" (DP, 137). In other words, more attention is given to causes than effects; the emphasis lies upon the *production* of the natural voice, rather than the natural voice itself. That training is ongoing and is the primary focus of Linklater's method.

According to Foucault, the training modality implies an "uninterrupted, constant coercion, supervising the processes of the activity rather than its result" (137). In *Freeing the Natural Voice*, "results" are considered, but little room is given to their discussion, and it is clear that the sequential exercises assume pre-eminence,

to the point where, in some cases, they are removed altogether from their aesthetic application. For example, Linklater writes: “By *training* I mean the pure, virtually segregated freeing and developing of the vocal instrument, unencumbered by external material such as words. This can be deeply satisfying work. It should take place with no clamouring for results, with no sense of haste” (*FNV*, 193).

Foucault observes that these three aspects (which he calls “disciplines”) combine to produce a relation of “docility-utility” (*DP*, 137). Like Foucault’s soldiers, Linklater’s actors become members of a skilled workforce, a group of people to carry out specific required tasks. Foucault writes:

Discipline produces subjected and practised bodies, “docile” bodies. Discipline increases the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminishes these same forces (in political terms of obedience). In short, it dissociates power from the body; on the one hand, it turns it into an “aptitude,” a “capacity,” which it seeks to increase; on the other hand, it reverses the course of the energy, the power that might result from it, and turns it into a relation of strict subjection. (*DP*, 138)

The Linklater method simultaneously increases the actor’s forces by developing his or her body and voice, and diminishes those forces by training that body and voice to be subject to someone else’s text and direction. In the same mode as dominant culture, nature is placed in service of artifice.

Fundamentally, Linklater’s vocal technique for actors involves the control of behaviour by certain prescribed methods until that behaviour becomes automatic, habitual, and *natural*. The voice on stage might appear to be “natural” and “free,” but that belies the amount of training in the body. “Freedom” is achieved by forms of constraint and the method constructs as much as it deconstructs, resulting in docile bodies who speak with docile voices.

Discussing Linklater’s method from the perspective of docile bodies/docile voices clarifies and reinforces the argument vis-à-vis the orthodoxy and the homogenising influence of “natural voice” training. Essentially, the natural voice is a compliant, acquiescent voice that is produced via the erasure of social, psychical and psychological resistances, and which, in the theatrical context, is placed in the service of others. The actor is trained to conform, to behave in a circumscribed way that emphasises neutrality and de-emphasises an individual, political voice, and so is more likely to abide by conventional modes of production, reiterate existing interpretations, and generate existing meanings in his or her work. Consequently, the performances

produced by Linklater-trained actors will inevitably fit into hegemonic models and uphold middle-class values and practices.

In making this argument, I do not suggest that actors should not be flexible to some degree; after all, they are employed to adapt, and that is not, in itself, disempowering. Neither do I imply that Linklater's students are particularly naïve individuals who have been "conned" by a manipulative voice teacher. The point is that Linklater's method, while claiming to give actors the "freedom" to explore their "natural" selves, establishes certain ideological parameters that encourage actors to privilege hegemonic modes of performance. Like the martial arts, Linklater's method prescribes particular forms and produces particular results.

In its docile, accommodating, socially conservative role, the natural voice may be understood to operate discursively as a *feminine* voice. In characterising the natural voice as feminine, the problematic issue of the mind/body dichotomy also arises. The mind/body dichotomy, founded on a dualistic structuring of the world that erects one term as the norm and then casts the other into the negative, is a fraught feminist argument, primarily because "man" is associated with the mind, and therefore privileged, while "woman," along with the body, is cast as the negative "other." This mind/body dichotomy is one of Linklater's core contentions. Her psycho-physical training programme necessarily attempts to integrate the two elements, because, as she asserts, "each person is indivisibly mind and body" (*FNV*, 2). Linklater confirms that, "The point I make over and over again both in *Freeing the Natural Voice* and *Freeing Shakespeare's Voice* is that the actor needs to restore the balance between intellect and emotion that has been conditioned out of us both by the evolution from an oral culture to a print and technological culture over the last five hundred years, and by the mind/body split inherent in western educational strategies" (*Responses*, 52). For Linklater, the synthesis of mind and body is the key to truthful, "natural" communication. She elaborates:

The problem for us is that words seem attached to ideas and detached from instinct. Feelings, attached to instinct and experienced physically, have to struggle for verbal expression because words seem to belong not in the body but in the head. The mistake has been the banishment of words from the body. Human communication has become fragmented and weakened, even false. To change this we have to take the risk of indulging in the sensual experience that words can give us when returned to their rightful home in the body. [...] For safety's sake we have persuaded ourselves that print, logic, intellectual ideas and the spoken word are one thing while our bodies and feelings are another. (*FNV*, 172) [...] The basis of all my work is the

belief that voice and language belong to the whole body rather than the head alone and that the function of the voice is to reveal the self. (*FSV*, 4)

These claims that Linklater makes about her work suggest a strongly feminist viewpoint. By advocating an equal integration of mind and body, Linklater's work would seem to support a self that transcends or collapses the hierarchical dialectic between man and woman. However, in comparing these claims *about* her work with the ideas *in* her work, an important difference emerges. Linklater consistently defines dominant culture as associated with the mind, and therefore masculinity, then, in contrast, positions her work in the realm of the body which, within this paradigm, aligns the natural voice with femininity. In this way, then, Linklater does not accomplish an integration of mind and body, but maintains the distinction, which would seem to support a feminised, disempowered self.

Indeed, a closer analysis of Linklater's work reveals that, despite her assertions, she does not amalgamate nor make ambiguous the distinction between mind and body and its attendant dualisms, but establishes several binaries, including: nature and culture/artifice; oral/voice and literary/writing; individual and social; universal and historical; emotion and intellect/reason; body and mind; image and text; unconscious and conscious; impulse and judgement; depth and surface; internal and external; self and other;⁸ child and adult; rural and urban; animal and human; freedom and restraint; and, to a large extent in *Freeing the Natural Voice*, voice and speech. In Rousseauesque fashion, Linklater situates herself consistently with the first terms, which she privileges through an association with truth and honesty, while the second are related to an essentially dishonest intellectual and cultural conditioning (Knowles, 99). If Linklater's natural voice is a feminine voice according to this model, then it inevitably leads to performances that support a bourgeois ideology. On its own, the natural voice has the potential to be empowering for women, with its emphases on freedom of expression, and its capacity to equip women with stronger, fuller and more authoritative voices. However, the methods by which the natural voice is produced, and the uses to which the natural voice is put in an aesthetic context (the voice (body, feminine) in service of the text (mind, masculine)), are not empowering, accentuating traditionally "feminine" qualities of the natural voice and submerging its feminist

⁸ The distinction between self and other is complicated. "Self" is usually associated with the masculine, and "other" with the feminine. Here, "self" is appropriated by the feminine/natural voice. However, although the natural voice is premised on the self, the self eventually subordinates itself to the other on stage. The actor is acted upon, so becomes the object rather than the subject.

potential. Linklater's stereotypical construction of the feminine plays straight back into hegemonic discourse, limiting the actor's ability to move outside conventional frameworks and, in particular, reducing the possibilities for feminist performances, especially of canonical works.

The application of the natural voice to Shakespearean performance has particularly problematic repercussions. As I established earlier in this chapter, the final section of *Freeing the Natural Voice* is concerned with the link between voice training and text and acting. For Linklater, "text" refers automatically to "Shakespearean text"; indeed, she considers no other dramatist. Linklater's sequel volume, *Freeing Shakespeare's Voice*, expands upon this final section of *Freeing the Natural Voice*, and gives instruction on implementing the natural voice in performance. In examining the effects of the natural voice in Shakespearean performance, the focus of this analysis shifts away from the fundamentals of voice training, toward her ideas about history, literature, character and interpretation.

Although Linklater-trained actors work in various domains of stage and screen performance, Linklater is a Shakespeare "specialist," and her voicework is designed primarily to prepare students for Shakespearean acting. Ironically, therefore, the "freed," "natural" voice is put to work on some of the most highly constructed language in the dramatic canon. Linklater's admiration for Shakespeare is obvious. She auraticises his language and legacy, which leads her to privilege tradition over innovation and conform to dominant, middle-class, views of Shakespearean performance. This conservative thinking becomes especially problematic when it is pedagogically structured, certified, and delivered authoritatively to susceptible student actors with docile bodies and voices. Three aspects of Linklater's work are particularly relevant to this discussion: the universalising assumptions about Shakespeare, especially the equation of Shakespeare with universal truth; the naturalisation of Shakespeare's language, and its effect on the relationship between language and character; and the emphasis on "feeling" the Shakespearean text over thinking about it.

Linklater makes universalising assumptions about Shakespeare and the Elizabethan period. She evinces a nostalgia for an earlier form of communication located in Elizabethan speech; in her opinion, Shakespeare's language is exemplary of the younger, more direct, vital and embodied expression that her natural voice methods seek to recreate in contemporary actors; as she claims: "When you have

‘rehabilitated’ your speaking for Shakespeare, you will have rediscovered your ‘natural’ speech” (*FSV*, 49). As a result, it is possible to read the natural voice as linked inherently to Shakespeare: in Linklater’s view, if actors look inside themselves and free their bodies and natural voices, they will “find” Shakespeare. Linklater corroborates this view in the early pages of *Freeing Shakespeare’s Voice*, where she makes a sweeping generalisation about actors’ comprehension of Shakespeare and his benefits. Reiterating her main tenets, she writes:

The natural voice has two to three octaves of speaking notes capable of expressing the full gamut of human emotion and all the subtleties and nuances of thought. To release its potential we must dissolve the limitations imposed by twentieth-century upbringing and awaken the dormant power that brings breath into every cell of the body and restores largesse of expression and stature to the human-actor-being. Instinctively, actors know that Shakespeare offers them this greater scope. (*FSV*, 7)

It is worth noting that the actors’ comprehension is *instinctive*, because Shakespeare is *natural*. Consequently, Shakespeare becomes part of Linklater’s therapy for the individual and the community. Throughout her programme, Linklater emphasises the universal scope, essential truth and timeless relevance of Shakespeare. Evading issues of canon-formation and socio-historic contingencies, she asserts that “right-minded people know that the classics should reveal to the audience a universal message plumbed from the depths reverberating below national or racial distinctions” (*FSV*, 201). Linklater’s faith and investment in the universality of the (notably, British) classics, and her positing of a Western cultural icon as the font of universal truth, demonstrates a cultural imperialism that is congruent, arguably, with middle-class values (Knowles, 103), and that is likely to generate conservative renderings of Shakespeare in performance.

Notably, in her subsequent work, Linklater has maintained her culturally imperialist stance and reification of the Western classics, and it has not gone unnoticed nor uncriticised. For example, in a recent article in *American Theatre* (January 2000), Linklater went so far as to speak out against actors “diluting” their training with craft from other cultures, asserting that, “actors in training are often submitted to a kind of transcultural grafting that dilutes their art, instead of getting deep nourishment from the meat and potatoes of our own European-based, verbal traditions.” She acknowledged that actors can pick up ideas from many sources, but “should be wary of becoming whores with low self-esteem. They and their teachers

sell themselves short when they bow down to foreign gods" (Diamond *BA*, 30). These sentiments led Linklater's colleague, Anne Bogart, to characterise Linklater as "xenophobic, exclusionary and borderline racist," retorting that her comments were "uninformed as they are destructive," "demonise[d] the possibility of cross-cultural exchange," and were symptomatic of a "reactionary conservatism that does not belong in the arts" (*AT*, April 2000; Diamond *BA*, 30).

Because Shakespeare exists as the foundation of the natural voice, Linklater's methods result in a "naturalising" of Shakespeare. For example, Linklater's emphasis on the individual and on common humanity naturalises the social order of Shakespeare's plays,⁹ which affects how actors understand their characters. For instance, her ahistorical perspective and universalising assumptions tend to construct Shakespeare's characters as universal types, investing them with a permanence and a generic quality that reinforce essentialist notions of human nature. This strategy also privileges the character in the construction of meaning and "truth." To read Shakespeare's characters – particularly his female characters – in this way denies social change and isolates their characterisation from critical interpretation, hindering politically resistant readings of the plays (Werner *PS*, 252). Natural voice training also teaches that language and character are linked intimately. Consequently, Linklater's exercises naturalise the constructed rhythms and textures of Shakespeare's heightened text, convincing the actor that there is no separation between these spoken words and the inner life of the character (251). Linklater's approach seems to ignore the fact that Shakespeare's language is a carefully cultivated artifice, informed by the conventions of the genre and influenced by literary, social and historical antecedents. The apparent suggestion is that blank verse was everyday usage for the Elizabethans, occurring as a "natural" and spontaneous" form of human expression. These "naturalising" assumptions about character and voice that circulate in Linklater's voice training, then, disallow considerations of representational and dramaturgical strategies (*VT*, 183). If meaning lies with the character's motives rather than the playwright's, then this prevents consideration of the dramaturgical effects of the scene and impedes culturally resistant Shakespearean performances (*PS*, 253).

⁹ Linklater's understanding of the Elizabethan social order is influenced largely by the "chain of being" as outlined in E. M. W. Tillyard's *The Elizabethan World Picture* (London: Penguin/Chatto and Windus, 1990).

Finally, Linklater's approach to voice work and Shakespeare functions hegemonically by privileging feeling over thinking. This is a theme that runs through both of Linklater's books and so is not applicable only to her work with Shakespeare; however, her anti-intellectual partiality is particularly strong in relation to Shakespeare, probably because his work receives substantial academic attention. Linklater argues that, "Thoughts run in patterns. As long as they stay in their grooves they reassure our existence and keep us safe from new experiences which might awaken us to an alarming new look at ourselves and the world around us" (*FSV*, 31). Tapping into the emotions is the way to spark imagination and "plumb the depths of the human condition and tell the truth" (31). On the contrary, I would argue that the "feeling over thinking" bias emphasises both the compliant, feminine quality of the natural voice and the construction of the actor as a docile body. It is depoliticising and disempowering because scepticism and the curiosity that drives criticism is withheld from the actor (Werner *PS*, 256). "Feeling" is equated with "truth," which implies that "truth" will be compromised if actors think critically about different approaches and meanings. This bias stops the actor from stepping outside the author's truth, restricting interpretations that may encourage social change or counteract tradition and prejudice (256). Ironically, therefore, in pursuing emotion as a means of escaping established patterns, Linklater ends up cementing them.

In her article, "Performing Shakespeare," Sarah Werner observes that, "the tools [actors] work with determine what they can build" (249). Linklater's assumptions about freedom, nature, reality, the mind-body relationship, the text, acting, identity, character, human nature, society/civilisation, Shakespeare and the Elizabethan context narrowly constrain the range of interpretive choice for the actor when working with text, and restrict the vocal choices available, limiting the range of meanings produced and diminishing the agency of the actor as a speaking subject. Furthermore, Linklater's faith in, and submission to, conventional readings of the patriarchal canon are especially damaging to feminist performances of Shakespeare. Linklater's middle-class ideology is likely to continue to impede performances that evoke social change because, if the training and presuppositions of the cast are conservative, then genuinely radical oppositional attempts to stage plays may be thwarted. At best, the performance may be radical in content, but may be rendered functionally familiar by its modes of production (Knowles, 107-08). Werner suggests that the actor could in fact be much "freer" and counteract tradition and prejudice if

voicework treated voice and language as constructed, not organic. She avers: "While most voice teachers recognise that the voice is something we can consciously affect, they usually use this as a way of encouraging us to rid ourselves of our bad vocal habits and return to our natural voices. But if our voices are riddled with bad habits, then perhaps the natural voice is just another sort of habit" (257). She suggests that, if we looked at how we manipulate our voices, recognising how our environments have shaped our voices, then voice could function as a powerful tool to exploit the social and political implications that make the sounds we carry, and could effect social change.

Linklater's "vocal technique for actors" is designed and promoted as a method to facilitate spoken expression in stage actors. As such, her training programme, with its ideal of the "natural voice," has become one of the mainstays of conventional Anglo-American theatre training of the past generation, and *Freeing the Natural Voice* and *Freeing Shakespeare's Voice* have themselves become canonical voice texts. Incorporating elements of voice science, Romanticism and psychotherapy, Linklater's work has been widely considered to be a radical breakaway from old, formal methods of voice training. I would argue, however, that it is important to be aware of ideologies implicit in dominant methods of voice training and to be circumspect about the effects that they may produce, especially when the method is designed to suggest that there is no ideology, and that "natural," "free" performances will not restrict meanings, interpretations or results. Accordingly, although Linklater's voice work is presented as a set of neutral tools that will help us free our voices, free ourselves, and help actors understand and communicate a text, an analysis of the cultural biases behind her vocal pedagogy reveals that both the underlying ideology and the methods of reading and acting it produces limit the possibilities for performance, especially of Shakespeare, that are feminist, or advance social change (*PS*, 243).

If Linklater's "natural voice" is a middle-class, conservative, non-reactionary, "docile" voice that will never function as a springboard for culturally resistant work, where might one turn to find voices that encourage social change and, particularly, stimulate feminist performances that challenge the status quo and extend the boundaries of performance? Might such voices negotiate a more productive relationship between mind and body? Moreover, if Linklater's natural voice is not in fact natural, what is a natural voice, if such a thing can be said to exist? Could it be

defined more easily by examining the use of “unnatural” voices? An obvious approach would be to search beyond actors trained in the techniques of classical theatre, who have not come under the influence of the ideologies inherent in dominant methods of voice training. Exemplary in this category are performance artists: visual artists who are politically motivated and use performance as a medium to articulate their cultural resistance. In performance art, politics are more likely to dictate the performance style than the performance style is to dictate the politics. My subsequent chapters, therefore, focus on two prominent American feminist performance artists, Karen Finley and Laurie Anderson. Finley and Anderson, although contrasting considerably in their material and approaches, represent to a large extent the antithesis of Linklater and her methods. Whereas Linklater-trained actors become “neutral” vehicles for others’ words, ideas and direction, Finley and Anderson maintain control of their texts, the content and exposition of their performances, the style of speaking, and the agenda. Significantly, both artists fashion new, “unnatural” voices to occupy different viewpoints and produce different effects. Chapter Three explores these ideas in greater depth through an examination of the use of voice in the performance art of Karen Finley.

Chapter Three

Sorceress and Hysteric: Voice and the Performance Art of Karen Finley

At the climax of her performance of *We Keep Our Victims Ready*, Karen Finley stands centre stage, naked except for a red chignon and red panties. Her legs, arms, stomach and breasts are smeared with chocolate, and adorned with candy, alfalfa sprouts and silver tinsel. The chocolate looks like excrement, and the tinsel glints as it catches the light every time Finley's chest heaves to take a rapid, clavicular gasp. Finley's performance is not pleasurable for the audience. She speaks a monologue that catalogues a litany of memories and accusations of gang rape, drug addiction, self-mutilation and animal abuse. Her tone is highly agitated, and it seems that she is releasing a great torrent of anger and pain. As she speaks, it is as if different personae take up different parts of the monologue; Finley's voice switches frequently, as if several people are speaking from within her, or through her, as though she is hysterical, or possessed. At one point, she directly addresses the audience, situating each member as her abuser, crying: "When I said NO, you didn't listen to me! When I said NO, you fucked me anyway!" Finley's performance is confrontational, provocative, disturbing and somewhat repellent. It is weird to see, but even weirder to listen to. While most critics of Finley's work are fixed on what they see, I am concerned with what we hear.

Over the past 20 years, Karen Finley has emerged as one of the United States' most controversial feminist performance artists. In this chapter I examine Finley's use of the voice in her performance piece, *We Keep Our Victims Ready* (1990), in terms of her use of an "unnatural" voice that contrasts with Linklater's notion of a "natural" voice. Both Linklater and Finley are committed to challenging and resisting forms of social repression, but they pursue their goals in very different ways. Rather than producing a psychotherapeutically centred, relaxed voice, "freed" from harmful repressive social accretions, Finley's voice more actively challenges the status quo, specifically by harnessing the emotional and physical tensions that arise from a warped, sick society. By using her voice to confront a selfish, sexist, abusive capitalist society with the *effects* of its actions, Finley attempts to motivate a better society based on tolerance and love. Additionally, rather than using an individual voice, grounded in a unified, coherent subject, Finley's many voices represent multiple

subjectivities within the self. Compared with the natural voice, Finley's approach extends the boundaries of feminist performance, opens up a greater space for political action and runs less risk of bourgeois assimilation. I define Finley's performance as an act of "transgressive speaking" and read it through the lens of *écriture féminine*, an aspect of French feminist theory. Specifically, I use Hélène Cixous' and Catherine Clément's notions of the "sorceress" and "hysteric" – powerful, transgressive speaking and performing figures, and exemplars for the female condition – as a way of interpreting the quality and effects of Finley's vocal performance. *Écriture féminine* also provides a framework for thinking about the mind/body dualism. An ancillary consideration, as with Linklater, will be to examine how Finley, as a feminist performer, negotiates the relationship between mind and body in her work.

Karen Finley was born in 1956 in Evanston, Illinois. Her father was a professional jazz percussionist and her mother was a housewife and social activist. Both sides of Finley's family had a history of dysfunctionality and depression, particularly her father, who battled manic depression and heroin addiction until his suicide in 1978, when Finley was 21. At the time, Finley was studying painting at the San Francisco Art Institute. Although she eventually graduated with an MFA (1981), her father's death catalysed her shift from painting to performance art. Finley confesses, "I had difficulty being alone and doing static work when I was feeling such active emotion ... [Performance] is a way of balancing the pain of his death" (Levy, 60).

Since the late 1970s, Finley has worked as a performance artist in nightclubs, galleries, theatres and museums in the United States, Canada and Europe, and her work has also been shown in South America, Asia and Australia. In the early years of her career she supported herself between performances by working as a stripper and a cocktail waitress. In 1984 she moved to New York, where she remained until relocating to Los Angeles in 1999. Although Finley has produced an eclectic range of art, comprising installations, prints, paintings and illustrations, books, photography, an interactive phone line and pop songs, it is her spoken monologues that have brought her the most recognition and infamy, especially her earlier works, *The Constant State of Desire* (1986) and *We Keep Our Victims Ready* (1990).

Finley's work did not attract significant critical attention until the late 1980s, when the negative publicity that ensued over her confrontational politics, provocative language, and prurient use of the body created widespread interest. She was banned

from several performance sites and asked by police to alter or tone down her performances, which she refused to do. Subsequently, she became subject to death threats, censorship, audits, government investigation, and threats of deportation during her overseas tours. Finley first started garnering public censure in the United States in 1986, after her performance of a piece from *I'm an Ass Man*, "Yams Up My Granny's Ass," was reviewed in *The Village Voice* (Carr UP, 17). In response to the article, journalist Pete Hamill wrote a denunciation of Finley in the same newspaper, accusing her, incorrectly, of sodomising herself with yams. The attack made her determined to do "even more outrageous things" with her body (Finley *DKI*, 29). Finley gained national notoriety after performing *We Keep Our Victims Ready*, when she was criticised by conservative columnists Rowland Evans and Robert Novak and caricatured as "the chocolate-smearing woman." Following condemnation from the political Right, especially from Senator Jesse Helms, regarding her "offensive" and "transgressive" performances, Finley's solo performance grant from the National Endowment for the Arts was rescinded. Finley banded together with three other defunded artists, Holly Hughes, Tim Miller and John Fleck, to sue for reinstatement of their grants, and they were eventually successful (102). The "NEA Four" then challenged the constitutionality of legislation requiring the NEA to consider "general standards of decency," a case that took them all the way to the Supreme Court, where, in 1998, they lost. As a result, Finley has emerged as a *persecuted* performance artist. Persecution has become a defining feature both of her identity as an artist and her performances: each represents a struggle against sexualisation, censorship, censure, misrepresentation, marginalisation and silencing.

Finley's identity as a notorious and persecuted artist established her career for the 1990s. During that decade she was seen as an anti-censorship crusader and a hero-martyr for free speech, and she emerged as a prominent voice in women's performance art; to her detractors, she remained an obscene, over-funded, irritating poseur. Although entrenched in the profession rather than academia, she has lectured in museums, colleges, and at Harvard and Yale universities. Her artwork has featured in museums throughout the country, including the Whitney Museum of American Art, and in 1995 she received a Guggenheim Fellowship and an Obie Award for her work, *The American Chestnut*. In 1998, Finley was elected *Ms. Magazine's* "Woman of the Year," in 1999 she was voted *Coagula Magazine's* "Artist of the Decade," and she was photographed by *Playboy* the same year. Finley continues to perform her work

throughout the United States and was involved most recently with the 2003 “Scream Out” performance/protest in New York City, which she initiated with the help of the Women’s Action Coalition. The Scream Out condemned the Bush administration for “destroying our basic American freedoms.” 250 women attended the protest, during which each charge against the government was “answered with a scream of rage and resistance, fury and frustration” (WAC, n.p.). Significantly, in comparison with Linklater, Finley encourages the opposite of docile bodies and voices. Her voice is not accommodated within a conservative, bourgeois hegemony, but is a voice of resistance, harnessing the power of the female voice for social change. Finley’s screaming is an example of what Linklater would consider to be “bad voicework.” Finley’s voice does not emanate from one at ease physiologically and psychologically, but is distorted by a warped society and draws its very power from the unresolved tensions, fears and monsters inherent within it. While Linklater advocates a retraining of the body and voice to release habitual, socially-induced tensions, Finley believes that both body and voice must embrace these tensions and sicknesses and throw them back at society to confront.

Finley’s work is situated within a feminist and postmodern critique of contemporary American culture and the power of representation. Primarily, she is enabled by a generic tradition of feminist autobiographical performance art popularised in the 1960s, concomitant with the women’s movement and consciousness-raising (Kern, 2; Roth, 20), which aimed to “politicise personal experience, create empathy, and blur the line between performative and social experiences of women” (Goldstein, 105). Finley draws material from her own life, but transmogrifies it into something generic and metaphorical. She asserts, “it’s not important whether or not I have actually experienced what I talk about” (Robinson, 45). Finley’s principal subject is “Woman,” debased and abused by a patriarchal capitalist culture. Her cultural offenders are social types, rather than individuals, and she links social conditions to the politics of sex, desire and consumption, providing a symbolic condemnation of a consumer culture that treats its citizens, especially women and children, as disposable products (Pramaggiore, 270). Through her visceral, startling monologues, she confronts her own culture; as a victim, she becomes an accuser, taking a stand against those who would censor, limit freedom, and act out of prejudice (Gussow *DKI*, xiii).

The contradiction at the core of Finley's art is that women are defined by their sexuality, then demonised for it (Carr *KFM*, 1). Finley argues that the American people have become "scared of [their] own sexuality, which is no longer a sexuality of love but a sexuality of violence" (Schechner *CSB*, 256). Finley's agenda reveals socialist-humanist ideals: a desire for a better society, based on peace, tolerance and unconditional love. Consequently, she maintains that she is concerned to disabuse her audiences of their quiescence, performing in the hope that her messages will evoke change after each audience member leaves the performance space. She affirms that "I stir people to be responsible for what's going on in their own lives, in their one-to-one relationships, interweaving this into the whole society's corruption" (255); and she suggests that audiences consider her performances as a "pep rally – really I think of myself as a motivational speaker" (Kern, 208). Finley's strategy is to turn pain into compassion, to "give something – do work which helps people connect emotionally in a sense of *sharing and clarifying emotional pain*" (Juno and Vale, 43). By articulating the abuse and making it public, Finley attempts not only to raise public consciousness, but to stimulate catharsis and healing.

Finley's chief performances include: *I'm An Ass Man* (1985); *The Constant State of Desire* (1986); *We Keep Our Victims Ready* (1990); *A Certain Level of Denial* (1992); *The American Chestnut* (1995); *The Return of the Chocolate-Smeared Woman* (1998); *Shut Up and Love Me* (1999); and *The Distribution of Empathy* (2002). During her twenty-year career, the tone of Finley's work has changed from outraged, shockingly confrontational works which present personae who perpetrate and experience the extremes of abuse, to works that are tamer, less scatological and challenging, less rhetorical and judgemental, more sophisticated and thoughtful, and which present personae who are not victims. For my analysis, I will pay particular attention to Finley's performance of *We Keep Our Victims Ready* as her most politically provocative, career-defining work.

The version of *We Keep Our Victims Ready* that I shall focus on is a videotaped performance, filmed at The Kitchen, New York City, on 20 April 1990. The Kitchen, founded in 1971, is an interdisciplinary laboratory and presenting organisation for visionary emerging and established artists, featuring avant-garde film and video, as well as more traditional theatre and concert performances. *Victims* uses a simple set and lighting. A large wooden rocking chair is placed downstage; there is a large table, centre stage, containing several food items; a smaller table further

upstage upon which is a basin, a jug of water, and a green upright; and, to the left, a bed with an iron frame, with another chair beside it. Finley enters casually, dressed in a black *vieux jeu* party dress and pink gumboots. Her hair is fixed in a red chignon in a parody of 1950s domesticity. She sits in the rocking chair and the lights come up.

From the moment she enters, Finley engages the audience with direct, informal conversation; for example, she reviews the television shows that she has watched that day, wonders about the reason for her chapped lips, and reminisces about make-out sessions she had as a teenager. Later, she discusses and hands out T-shirts that she has rebranded with a magic marker. Margaret Spillane has termed this banter, which varies between performances, “cute *epater la bourgeoisie* chitchat” (737). Although Spillane describes Finley’s approach pejoratively, she (perhaps inadvertently) makes an important observation that lends purpose to this repartee. *Epater les bourgeois*, or “to shock the middle classes,” was an expression adopted to describe all sorts of actions intended to raise questions about the very meaning of art, and to force the reassessment of the practice of everyday life (Goldberg *P*, 27). As such, Finley’s banter is congruent with her critique of middle class complacency, her desire for change, and her role in it as a performance artist.

Still seated in the chair, Finley launches into the body of her performance. *Victims* takes the form of vignettes that tell stories of censorship, repression, abuse, victimisation and misery, told from a variety of subject positions. Finley favours the female voice, but presents both male and female personae that erupt seemingly spontaneously, clamouring for attention: the elderly and the young, the living and the dead, psychopaths, paedophiles, child-murderers, frenzied macho-men, widows, mourners, alcoholics, abused children, neurotics, and even a coprophilic Adolf Hitler. Her personae are surrealist exaggerations who express the excesses of contemporary culture, but are recognisable enough as social types to have emotional resonance for non-American audiences. Finley’s personae use profane language and employ sexually explicit, scatological imagery, but Finley’s performance is not an uncontrolled outpouring of filth; the shocking content and the manner of its expression are contained by a purposeful formal construction that is consistent with the objectives of Finley’s psychological and social critique (Lavey, 360). For example, *Victims* is divided into three acts, each of which has its own theme, mood and staging. Act One consists of the monologues, “It’s Only Art” and “I Was Not Expected to be Talented.” Finley delivers these monologues fully clothed from her

rocking chair, with the house lights up, and reads from a written script in the style of the Beat generation performance poets. "It's Only Art," spoken clearly and forcefully in a strident, declamatory tone, is a subversive piece about censorship and repression, drawn from her own experiences with the NEA, and ends with her fantasy of the execution of Jesse Helms. She then warms to her theme in "I Was Not Expected to be Talented," which links the concept of repressed artistic creativity to the oppression, marginalisation and abuse of women.

In Act Two Finley foregrounds themes of violation and abuse. Leaving her chair, Finley stands and reads from a lectern, but becomes decreasingly dependent on her script. The subject matter becomes more controversial, provocative and disturbing, detailing sadistic fantasies, the horror of male violence against women and equally violent revenge scenarios. Pieces like "Aunt Mandy," "St. Valentine's Massacre," "We Are the Oven" and "Why Can't This Veal Calf Walk?" catalogue gang rape, murder, abortion, incest, self-mutilation and cruel annihilation of the powerless. In these monologues, Finley ranges between a greater number of personae, sometimes switching between several in the course of a single monologue, as if she is in a trance, or channelling the voices from elsewhere. Finley's changes between characters are sometimes abrupt, like switching television channels; at other times, she assumes a decrescendo of repeated phrases, allowing her voices to fade out like music, or to tune out like the transition between radio frequencies. Throughout this section, Finley's delivery becomes a deluge of raw emotion that seems to emanate from deep inside her; her vocal choices become more extreme, ranging over several octaves, from a high-pitched cackle, to a shrill keening, to a low Southern drawl. She screams, yells, cries and whispers, and augments her words with dramatic glissandos and dark vocal fry.

During this second act, the most "abusive" part of the performance, the various themes of violation are illustrated by Finley's use of food, which is juxtaposed with the content of the spoken monologues. During periods of silence between each monologue, Finley adorns herself with food items taken from the main table on stage. First, she removes her party dress, revealing a lacy black camisole and bright red panties. She puts jello in the brassiere of her camisole, then walks around the stage jiggling her enlarged breasts. Next, she strips down to her red panties, leaving on her pink gumboots. She smears chocolate icing over her bare breasts and legs, then between successive monologues in this section, covers herself with chocolate, candy,

alfalfa sprouts and silver tinsel. Although the origin of food in Finley's performances is uncertain,¹⁰ it is an integral part of her work (and, after *Victims*, her subsequent notoriety). Finley says: "Food provided a primitive, visceral, almost gruesome element. It helped to convey to the audience the ways in which the characters I portrayed were being violated" (Finley *DKI*, 23). In *Victims*, Finley's use of food was inspired largely by the 1988 Tawana Brawley case, in which Brawley, a 16 year-old African-American from New Jersey, claimed that she was raped and smeared with faeces by three white policemen. Finley explains:

It struck me so much [the Brawley case] and I knew that I couldn't do a piece where I actually put shit on myself. [...] I decided to put chocolate on myself. So I sat back, I covered myself with chocolate, like chocolate frosting. Then I put these red [candy] hearts on myself because after you're treated like shit then you're loved more. Then, I covered myself with alfalfa sprouts, which I think smell and look like sperm, because after you're treated like shit and you're loved, then you're jerked off on. And then I put on this silver tinsel because no matter how bad a woman's been treated, she still knows how to dress for dinner. (O'Malley, 3)

Using food in this way as a metaphoric illustration of abuse (of women) functions simultaneously to subvert conventional constructions of male desire, producing alternative visual images of the female body that are controversial, and which confront and accost the male viewer (Hill, 2). Finley's performance is not erotic. When we see a bare-breasted young woman covered in "shit" and "sperm," our response tends toward revulsion rather than scopophilia. This strategy enables Finley to express sexual objectification while limiting her own susceptibility to that same objectification.

Act Three brings a change in the performance in terms of mood, costume, lighting, staging and content. The house lights dim and Finley moves from the main table to the smaller upstage table. She fills the basin with water from the jug and washes her face. The green uplight on the table gives her face an eerie, phosphorescent glow. Finley then wraps her food-coated body in a white sheet, and sits beside the bed. She maintains this bedside vigil throughout the last act, which, in

¹⁰ Finley has provided several reasons for the use of food in her work. For example, she says that she started using food while living in poverty in New York, visiting a food kitchen and taking her props from there (Finley *DKI*, 23). She also confesses that her use of food was precipitated by father's suicide, when food was brought to the wake (Lavey, 331). Similarly, she claims that she got the idea while attending Howard Fried's class at the San Francisco Art Institute, during which students were asked to use food in their work. Finley put melons in her bra and referred to her breasts as melons, then ate out of the fruit and jogged with them in her bra to make the comment that jogging is difficult for any woman whose breasts are larger than a B-cup (Montano, 55).

contrast to the anger of Act Two, has an atmosphere of grief. The monologues “Departure” and “The Black Sheep” deal with AIDS, homosexuality, death, the complicity of the government, and the intense misery of being an outsider in a selfish, greedy society. Finley speaks as though to someone in the bed, but the absence of an addressee seems to include and implicate each audience member in her lament. By the final monologue, Finley is utterly distraught. She produces a high-pitched keening, her words catching with each clavicular, vocalised gasp. At times she weeps so profusely that she cannot speak. Meanwhile, she rocks back and forth on the chair, beating her chest rhythmically with her fists. *Victims* closes on a tone of intense mourning, but also complete exhaustion. By the time she fades out on her repeated line, “there’s only silence at the end of the phone,” it is as if the storm has blown itself out, the demon has been exorcised, the abreaction completed. The lights come up; Finley takes a bow and leaves the stage.

The most significant aspect of Finley’s performance, despite the overwhelming critical attention paid to what she does with her body, is what she does with her voice. Whatever Finley is producing, it is not the “natural” voice. Finley’s dynamism springs from her “unnatural” voice(s) which are produced by the angry, resistant, troubled self. In contrast to Linklater, whose work is premised on the discovery and development of the coherent humanist subject, Finley’s many voices represent a transgression and fragmentation of that unitary subject.

In analysing Finley’s vocal performance in *We Keep Our Victims Ready*, discourses of “transgressive speaking” assume prominence, and remain the focus of my analysis. My notion of “transgressive speaking” has at its core the traditionally unruly, rebellious figure of the speaking woman. Finley’s performance as a “speaking woman” is her primary mode of resistance, and the reason why she appears so threatening to conservative (male) America. From a phallo-logocentric perspective, the transgressive is that which eschews rationality, linear logic, monosemy, unified (male) subjectivity, and culture, and which is associated with the feminine, the irrational, multiplicity and polysemy, the disorderly, the body and nature, and perhaps the unconscious and the supernatural. It is peripheral, but perceivable; marginalised, but dangerous.

Consequently, in reading Finley’s acts of “transgressive speaking” and their intended effects, feminist concerns are obvious. However, some American academic feminists have found it difficult to pinpoint Finley’s precise feminist inclinations; for

example, Lynda Hart labels Finley's politics as "provocatively ambiguous," occupying simultaneously the theoretically oppositional positions of radical and liberal feminism. She concludes that, "[Finley's] performances occupy politic-aesthetic spaces that are not easily subsumed under either a liberal or radical feminist agenda" (111). I would argue that, although radical and/or liberal feminist elements may indeed be present in Finley's work, it is more useful to explore French feminist models, particularly *écriture féminine*, as providing an appropriate framework for reading her performance. Finley's "irrationality," her foci on the body and female sexuality, her many voices and multiple female personalities, her disorder, her privileging of the "unconscious," her emphasis on "otherness" from men, and her interest in women's *representation* as much as their *silencing*, align her closely with the themes and concerns of *écriture féminine* as espoused by Luce Irigaray, Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément. In particular, Cixous' and Clément's figures of the sorceress and hysteric, two sides of the same coin, offer useful models for analysing Finley's vocal performance in *Victims*.

Despite having similarities with American academic feminism, French feminism draws upon different cultural sources, takes different approaches, employs different strategies, and proposes different solutions. French feminism, especially the branch of *écriture féminine*, is rooted in a tradition of European philosophy, linguistics and psychoanalysis. It posits the feminine as that which is repressed and misrepresented in the discourses of western culture and thought, because the production of western knowledge, its standards of objectivity, rationality and universality, require the exclusion of the *feminine*, the *bodily* and the *unconscious*. French feminism argues that western philosophy's logical ordering of reality into hierarchies, dualisms and binary systems presupposes a prior gender dichotomy of man/woman, in which woman is inferior. Not only has women's voice or experience been excluded from the subject matter of western knowledge, even when the discourse is "about" women, or women are the speaking subjects, it/they still speak(s) according to phallographic codes. For example, Hélène Cixous asks: "Where is she? Activity/passivity Sun/Moon Culture/Nature Day/Night Father/Mother Head/Heart Intelligible/Palpable Logos/Pathos ... Man/Woman. Always the same metaphor ... Is the fact that Logocentrism subjects thought – all concepts, codes and values – to a binary system, related to 'the' couple, man/woman?" (*NBW*, 63-4). She argues that organisation by hierarchy makes all conceptual organisation subject to man. The male

is active and privileged, whereas western philosophy is premised on woman's abasement: either woman is passive or she does not exist (64). French feminism seeks to undermine such dualisms; essentially, it deconstructs the phallic organisation of sexuality and its code which positions woman's sexuality and signified body as a mirror or complement to male sexual identity, and conceives of empowerment for women through their feminine difference. Cixous writes:

If woman has always functioned "within" man's discourse, as a signifier referring always to the opposing signifier that annihilates its particular energy, puts down or stifles its very different sounds, now is the time for her to displace this "within," explode it, overturn it, grab it, make it hers, take it in, take it into her women's mouth, bite its tongue with her women's teeth, make up her own tongue to get inside of it. And you will see how easily she will well up, from this "within" where she was hidden and dormant, to the lips where her foams will overflow. (*NBW*, 95-6)

As we shall see, *Victims* is an excellent example of how Finley resists functioning within "man's discourse" in this way. Essentially, *Victims* is a demonstration of the active female self welling up, overflowing, using her "particular energy" and articulating her "very different sounds" to reinforce feminine difference and to stage a confrontational critique of male desire and the sexual objectification of women.

The chief goal of feminine difference is the displacement of the male economy of desire for a female economy of pleasure, or *jouissance*; that is, total access to, participation in, and enjoyment of sexual, political, physical and economic rights. This concept is not contrary to Finley's hope. French feminism advocates a return to the female body, and the practice of "difference," that is, nonoppositional otherness from men. In order to achieve this, French feminism holds that a new women's writing of the discourse is necessary to retrieve the repression of the feminine unconscious in western discourse and models of subjectivity. On the basis of the radical alterity of women's sexual difference, a new, marked writing – writing the body, *écriture féminine* (or *parler-femme*, speaking the body) – is called for (Dallery, 52-4), which forges an existential or indexical relation between words and the female body (Silverman, 144-45). Writing the body celebrates women as sexual subjects, not objects of male desire, and it celebrates the *otherness* of woman's body; through writing the body, woman's distinct bodily forms and geography are progressively disclosed, blurring categories of binary thought and the signifying practices of male perception (Dallery, 58).

The most pertinent element of French feminist theory/*écriture féminine* for an analysis of Finley's vocal performance in *We Keep Our Victims Ready* is the notion of the sorceress and the hysteric, advanced by Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément in *The Newly Born Woman* (1975; 1986). Cixous and Clément argue that the sorceress and the hysteric (or the witch and the madwoman) are exemplary tropes for women. Both are symbolic of the female condition, and illustrative of her problematic position in a patriarchal culture. Essentially, the choice of sorceress and hysteric as female archetypes arises from a second-wave feminist interest in writing women's history. According to Showalter, early in the women's liberation movement, reclaiming the hostile labels attached to hostile or deviant women became a popular feminist strategy. Although "hysteria," like "witchcraft," had always been pejorative, they became positive terms for those trying to write the "her-story" of the silence, immobility, hyperfemininity and marginalisation imposed upon women by society (54). After 1968, French feminist intellectuals moved beyond historical analysis, and celebrated the hysteric and the sorceress as heroines, sisters and political martyrs. Women in the French feminist movement, many of them psychoanalysts themselves, saw hysteria as symbolic of women's silencing within the institutions of language, culture and psychoanalysis; thus, the "hysteric" became a means to discuss the exclusion of female subjectivity in a patriarchal culture (Showalter, 56; Bronfen, xi). Eventually, the hysteric (and the related concept of the sorceress) became representative of female absence. In the 1970s, hysteria was adopted as a political cause, with the development of the "hystericisation of feminism." The feminist aim became to recover a lost language of hysterics that could connect bodies to minds, and women to each other (Showalter, 56; Cixous *LM*, 216-17).¹¹

¹¹ Hysteria has always been associated with femininity, from the Greeks' diagnosis of lazy women with wandering wombs, to the demonically possessed women of the middle ages (Kahane, 9). In the nineteenth century, Jean-Martin Charcot, the "inventor of modern hysteria," was the first to identify it as a unified organic disease (Showalter, 30). Breuer and Freud, however, were the first to start paying serious attention to the hysteric's stories. Hysteria as a psychoanalytic, poetic and political category began its contemporary history with Freud's case study of Dora (Freud, 1905). Freud defined hysteria as the result of trauma, in which traumatic memories were banned, then converted into bodily symptoms that were "mnemonic symbols" or physical metaphors of the repressed trauma (mostly childhood sexual abuse) (38-40). Freud eventually developed the "talking cure," during which, by verbalising the scene of their trauma, patients would effect an abreaction, or catharsis, thus purging their symptoms. Following Freud's death, Jacques Lacan (1901-1981) became the strongest contender for the position of hysterical impresario. He conducted rereadings of Freud with structuralist/poststructuralist twist, positing hysteria as a linguistic and cultural phenomenon, and a metaphor for Woman and femininity. Hysteria, women, femininity and gender were knotted together; the hysteric was most likely a woman struggling with her sexual identity (Showalter, 46-7).

Clément and Cixous have as their cynosure the sometimes oppressive, sometimes privileged madness fostered by marginalisation. For Clément and Cixous, the sorceress and hysteric are the only roles in society available to the artistic, creative, expressive woman. For such women, the sorceress/hysteric persists in her everyday life, in her body. Patriarchal repression causes her to experience creative, passionate outbursts of excess, but then marginalises her for it. Sandra Gilbert notes Clément's argument that the misrule that governs witchcraft and the rebellious body/language that manifests hysteria are culturally stylised channels into which *excess* demonically flows – excess desire, excess rage, excess creative energy – only to be annihilated by the society that drove it in such directions (xii). Cixous declares that patriarchal society has oppressed and repressed female consciousness, alienating women from their bodily selves and channelling female desire into the flights of the sorceress and the fugues of the hysteric (*NBW*, 64). Simultaneously produced and repressed by society, the sorceress and hysteric are problematic roles, representing a threat to the phallocracy, but disempowered and displaced by it. As Clément notes:

This feminine role, of the sorceress, of the hysteric, is ambiguous, antiestablishment, and conservative at the same time. Antiestablishment because the symptoms – the attacks – revolt and shake up the public, the group, the men, the others to whom they are exhibited. ... These roles are *conservative* because every sorceress ends up being destroyed, and nothing is registered of her but mythical traces. Every hysteric ends up inuring others to her symptoms, and the family closes around her again, whether she is curable or incurable. (5)

The sorceress/hysteric occupies a liminal position on the margins of culture, and operates between established systems. As such, she helps undermine the dualistic oppositions of western logocentric thought. She blurs the boundaries between such binaries as mind and body, conscious and unconscious, fact and fantasy, sanity and insanity, activity and passivity, self and other, life and death, mortality and immortality, and nature and culture,¹² and erases the distinctions between past, present and future. Clément writes that:

Societies do not succeed in offering everyone the same way of fitting into the symbolic order; those who are ... between symbolic systems, in the

¹² Sherry Ortner (1974) argues that the female role is understood traditionally as that of a mediating influence between nature and culture, which situates women lower on the scale of transcendence than men. This position accounts for typical subversive symbols (witch, hysteric) and transcendent symbols (mother, priestess, goddess) which arise from their position on the periphery of culture. If Ortner is right, then, as Gilbert acknowledges, the roles of sorceress and hysteric would indeed be exemplary tropes for the female condition.

interstices, offside, are the ones who are afflicted with a dangerous symbolic mobility. Dangerous for them, because those are the people afflicted with what we call madness, anomaly, perversion. ... But this mobility is also dangerous – or productive – for the cultural order itself, since it affects the very structure whose lacunae it reflects. ... And more than any others, women bizarrely embody this group of anomalies showing the cracks in an overall system. (7)

Therefore, although the sorceress/hysteric is symptomatic of a problematic societal structure, she is also somewhat emblematic. Her anomalous, transgressive, mobile nature represents something that women must strive to cultivate and articulate: the passion, the frenzied desire, and the freedom from the repressed unconscious, which combine in resistance against the phallocracy.

Finley performs both sorceress and hysteric. Clément and Cixous use the notion of sorceress/hysteric literally in the first instance, to refer to the (historical) fate of women who did not conform to patriarchal norms (that is, denounced as mad or evil); and also metaphorically or discursively, as a way to describe women's exclusion from patriarchal discourse. Finley exists as strange mixture of the two: she evinces elements of the "witch" or "madwoman" as the nonconformist woman artist, and her performance speaks as a metaphor for the marginalisation that causes the silencing, suffering, abuse and degradation of women.

As Clément avers, "These 'women's stories' are not inscribed in a void or in an ahistorical time when their repetitions would be identical. Each time there is a repetition of memories, a return of the repressed, it will be in a specific cultural and historical context" (Clément, 6). Subsequently, in America's contemporary capitalist, consumerist society, Finley emerges as a sorceress/hysteric for her time. Essentially, Finley is representative of the repressed of her culture. If we consider Finley's performance in the context of her career and critical/public responses to her work, we see that she fits the model. Finley herself is an artist who is produced by the capitalist patriarchy that she reacts against, but is simultaneously persecuted by that very society. She speaks for victims as a victim, and articulates social problems as a social problem herself. Like the sorceress and the hysteric, in speaking out as the repressed, she engenders further repression. From her liminal position on the margins of culture, Finley enacts and critiques her own oppression, and her voice is a threat to solipsistic phallogocentric discourse. The reaction of the American political conservative Right (the quintessential patriarchy) clearly illustrates this response to Finley's work,

especially after *Victims*. It has attempted to marginalise and silence Finley by banning her performances, reneging on her funding, and condemning her as sick or mad, demonic or dangerous, or lewd and erotic. Finley confirms that, "I had invested much in being taken seriously. I felt that women were laughed at and sexualised when people wanted to shut them up and felt that this was happening to me" (Finley *DKI*, 29). Within the paradigm of sorceress and hysteric, the fate of the rebellious woman is to be ridiculed, demonised or sexualised. In sexualising Finley, the American patriarchy cast her as an object within the hegemonic male economy of desire, colonising her body in order to dominate her.

Nevertheless, Finley persists. In the convention of *écriture féminine* she asserts herself as a sexual subject. Finley's performance enacts a politics of disruption. By her writing and speaking, her woman's words and her self-conscious "return of the repressed," Finley represents what Sandra Gilbert describes as "an absence violently struggling to become a presence" (xiv). The role Finley performs is intense and hyperbolic. As general tropes, the hysteric and sorceress help Finley to speak about the female condition, to describe women's collective experience and articulate cultural resistance; indeed, as I have suggested, Finley's indictment of patriarchal capitalist society is premised upon her position as the resistant repressed.

Finley recalls that in her shift from visual art to performance art, "I started making more intense emotional work. I consciously made the decision to turn my disadvantages to my advantage. I made use of the fact that I was a woman, of my 'hysteria,' and my body" (*DKI*, 12). We see elements of the hysteric in *Victims*, where Finley's speech is punctuated with frequent sighs, gasps and groans. Her face becomes contorted, and sometimes she erupts with a manic kind of laughter; at one point, she shakes her head quickly from side to side and emits a long, piercing shriek. Hysteria can be read as a form of expression or self-performance (Bronfen, xii; Showalter, 7-8). Hysterics have been theatricalised in hysteria's contemporary history; for example, the "talking cure" developed by Breuer and Freud was also an *acting* cure, since their approach emphasised reliving and dramatising feelings while remembering and telling (Showalter, 101). Further, in relation to public theatre, especially Finley's artistic antecedents in the tradition of female theatrical spectacle, the poses of *grande hystérie* at Jean-Martin Charcot's Friday *spectacles* at the Salpêtrière closely resembled the stylised movements of French classical acting (101). Elin Diamond writes:

By the early to mid-nineteenth century, hysterical women [...] became semiotically indistinguishable from actresses playing hysterical fallen women in melodrama. In both we find eye rolling, facial grimaces, gnashing teeth, heavy sighs, fainting, shrieking, choking; “hysterical laughter” was a frequent stage direction as well as a common occurrence in medical asylums. (63)

By the twentieth century, metaphors of hysterical-woman-as-actress had become formalised in medical literature. As recently as 1977, acting was recommended as the ideal career for the hysteric, being a way to satisfy her exhibitionistic personality (Showalter, 102).

Finley takes advantage of the theatricality and spectacle associated with hysterical performance, channelling this energy for her political purposes. Finley’s sighing, gasping, shrieking and crying are examples of her palpable suffering in performance. In the final act of *Victims*, particularly, it is obvious that she is highly distressed and completely exhausted. It seems as though she is going to throw up and we wonder how long she can go on hyperventilating before she faints. It is gruelling simply to witness her. Finley confirms that this process is “very exhausting. After I perform I have to vomit, my whole body shakes, I have to be picked up and sat down. It takes me about an hour before I stop shaking. When performing I pick up the energies from the people, I got to completely psych into them because I want them to feel that I am really feeling it” (Schechner, 258). Why? In *The Newly Born Woman*, Clément considers hysteria as spectacle, an act of suffering spectacularly before an audience of men (10). Importantly, Clément observes that the hysteric’s spectacular attack is also a “festival,” a celebration of her guilt used as a weapon against the male audience (10-11). Thus, by making her suffering obvious, Finley garners her pain as discursive ammunition against a patriarchal capitalist society, exemplifying the destructive effects of a culture of greed, fear and abuse.

A characteristic element of Finley as performative hysteric is her tale-telling. Throughout *Victims*, Finley tells stories of seduction, victimisation and male aggression, which are uncompromising in their scatological portrayal of psychic and material violence, and in which the female body is contained and perpetually reinscribed within oppressive cultural formations (Hart, 114). These stories, which include the overworked waitress who cannot have any more children; Aunt Mandy and her fatal backstreet abortion; the drug addict raped by her uncle, her doctor and a policeman; and the friends dying of AIDS, may be understood to function as

performative sexual confessions. They are told in a voice of *excess* – excess rage, passion, energy and grief. In experiencing Finley's force, we gain a sense of connecting with something that exists beneath the veneer of socialisation. It is as though we are witnessing the release of enormous repression that encompasses the cultural as well as the personal. The outburst of the repressed entails a compulsive need to *tell*, as Finley's tales pour out one after the other in a stream of (un)consciousness.

"Tale-telling" became a central feature of the psychoanalytic treatment of hysteria, putting into words the disturbing fantasy (Veith, 258). As part of their "talking cure," Freud and Breuer developed the "cathartic method" in which hysterical patients verbalised the scene of their trauma, thus purging their debilitating symptoms (Diamond, 65). Finley's tale-telling, or performative sexual confessions, are intended to operate in this way. In taking on the collective and heterogenous trauma of the United States, Finley's performances attempt to effect a cultural catharsis. For example, in the piece, "The Black Sheep," near the close of *Victims*, Finley sits by a bed, wrapped in a white sheet. The lights are low. She speaks to the empty bed, which could contain anyone whom the spectator imagines or remembers. Finley ritualistically and repeatedly lifts her arms in an encircling gesture, then beats her fists against her chest, causing the red candy hearts beneath to burst and to seep through in a representation of bloody wounds. She is crying. Her voice is high-pitched and uneven, interspersed with clavicular gasps. She uses a repetitive intonation pattern, stressing the final word of each phrase, and building to a crescendo as she becomes increasingly distraught:

I feel your pain.
 I wish I could relieve you of your suffering.
 I wish I could relieve you of your pain.
 I wish I could relieve you of your destiny.
 I wish I could relieve you of your fate.
 I wish I could relieve you of your illness.
 I wish I could relieve you of your life.
 I wish I could relieve you of your death.

In the context of her hysterical performance, Finley's bedside vigil becomes a metaphor for, and a message for, society as a whole. Finley's approach recalls the performance strategies of Antonin Artaud, Finley's most salient artistic precedent from the theatrical avant-garde. Artaud's view of the theatre was as therapy, the means of curing an ailing psyche. The Theatre of Cruelty was designed to function as

spiritual healing, as catharsis for our repressed desires, and as a way to explore our inner states (Plunka, 21-2). Peggy Phelan notes that Artaud viewed the theatre as a stage upon which a public “talking cure” could be enacted:

Borrowing the thesis of Breuer and Freud’s early theory of the talking cure, a theory borne out by a clinical practice in which somatic speech, the symptom, could be removed after it was “acted out” for the listening spectator/doctor, Artaud based his idea of the theatrical talking cure on a similar acting out and mimicry: “I propose to bring back into this theatre this elementary magical idea, taken up by modern psychoanalysts, which consists in effecting the patient’s cure by making him assume the apparent and exterior attitudes of the desired audience (*Double*, 80).” (Phelan, 239-40).

Whereas Freud’s deepest aspiration was to cure the collective soul by treating individual patients in a form of “private theatre,” Artaud’s plan was to cure the collective soul through public theatre. Because theatre is public and collective, and psychoanalysis is private and individual, Artaud thought he had a greater curative potential. He advocated an abandoning of individual psychology and an entry into mass passions and the conditions of the collective spirit (Phelan, 240). Finley’s *raison d’être* mirrors this philosophy: in telling the tales of her culture through the many voices of its victims, Finley-as-hysteric tries to cure a sick society. Both Linklater and Finley support a psychotherapeutic mode of catharsis, but significantly, Finley’s approach differs from that which Linklater advocates, where the psychologically healed effect catharses for the audience, engendering a return to normality, and a reinforcement of hegemonic discourse. Finley remains in the position of one in pain and perturbation, so the catharses she engenders in her audience may be more likely to stimulate social change, rather than an affirmation of, or reconciliation to, the status quo.

Finley does not tell just one tale, but many. The salient features of Finley’s vocal performance in *Victims* are her range of voices and their varied delivery. In creating her characters, Finley’s voice changes markedly and rapidly, from the cantankerous hectoring of an overworked and underpaid waitress, to the dogged cackle of an alcoholic widow, to the terrified high-pitched appeal of a rape victim, to the rhythmic Southern drawl of a male chauvinist pig, to the tired, mournful confession of a funeral attendee. As Elinor Fuchs remarks, “There are no finished narratives, and more important [...] there are no finished narrators: the mutating ‘I’ is in turn woman, man, parent, child, all finding their level in the subterranean miasma

of sexual abuse and numbing excess that begins virtually in utero" (48). The deployment of different voices enables Finley to abandon the humanist "I" and to shift around, among and between subject and object positions. This transgression of the unitary, coherent humanist subject has a destabilising effect on her audience. For example, in *The History of Sexuality* Foucault defines confession as a ritual of discourse in which the speaking subject is also the subject of the statement, and which unfolds within a power relationship in which the listener takes the power (Goldstein, 106-7). By switching subject and object positions, and creating ambiguity between personae, Finley undermines this transactional dialectic. Of particular note is Finley's strategy of addressing the audience directly from her different subject positions, situating audience members as abusers to her victim, or victims to her abuser. For instance, in "Why Can't This Veal Calf Walk?" the female persona claims: "You raped me. I took a shower, a hot one, but I couldn't get clean [...] When I said 'No,' I meant 'No,' but you did it anyway." In "St Valentine's Massacre," Finley assumes the role of an abusive father, explaining: "I'm beating you with this belt, this whip, this stick, because I love you. You talked back to me and your mother. Your bloody back, your scars, are evidence of my love." This confrontational device is discomfiting and interrupts the position of power, pleasure and anonymity usually enjoyed by the listener/viewer.

We can analyse the multiplicity and shifts of Finley's voices in *Victims* according to the notion of the hysteric. Hysterical discourse explodes the logic of logocentrism. As Diamond points out, "Hysteria has become the trope par excellence for the rupture of the referent" (61). She notes that hysterical symptoms included "double consciousness" or the "hypnoid state," produced by separate and different psychic states in the same person. The two conditions (sometimes more) could exist side by side until the products of hypnoid states intruded into waking life in the form of hysterical symptoms. Although the patient might otherwise act normally, Freud observed that, "in their hypnoid states they are insane, as we all are in dreams" (70). It was not uncommon for different voices to accompany the different personae. Irigaray writes that, "'She' sets off in all directions ... Hers are contradictory words, somewhat mad from the standpoint of reason" (*TS*, 29). Although Finley still maintains a position of control and a presence in the performance – as Hart points out, never losing the ability to "self-consciously perform the unconscious" (112) – it could be argued that Finley appears to enter a "hypnoid state" in performance.

The effect of the hypnoid state is reinforced by the “trance state” that Finley assumes when she performs *We Keep Our Victims Ready*. She often restricts her physical movements and closes her eyes as she speaks the monologues, which gives the impression that she is retrieving these many voices from her unconscious. Periodically, she breaks from this “trance” to chat with the audience and reposition herself on stage, forming a intentional delineation between these two aspects of her performance. This “trancelike” delivery mode is one of the signature elements of Finley’s performance style. Some critics associate it with religious performance, others with a hypnoid state or spiritual possession, variously describing it as: the “fire-and-brimstone of a tent preacher,” (Goldstein, 112), or a “revival preacher,” (Montano, 54); a “religious frenzy” (Gleason, n.p.), and “evangelical;” “ranting,” “hysterical” or “incantatory;” as a “trance-rap ... from the id,” a “deluge” (Carr KFM, 1); “surrealistic, automatic talking .. [with] sing-song delivery of lines” (Schechner, 257); or a “torrent of words ... [Finley is] out of sight, out of control and possibly out of her mind” (Weiss, n.p.).

Interestingly, although Finley’s performances are structured and deliberate, her preparatory and performance strategies seem to situate her liminally between conscious and unconscious. She writes her scripts, but compiles them via “trance writing” or “associative writing;” she learns her material ahead of time, yet she does not rehearse and is spontaneous in performance, at times rejecting the prepared script. She says, “In the same way that one doesn’t rehearse for having a baby or having sex or falling in love, it’s all inside me when I do it” (Shapiro, 61), but also admits that in non-performance states, she does not want to know or recognise her other “selves”; for example, she experiences dissociation when she watches her performance persona(e) on video, saying, “I have to close my eyes. I don’t know who that person is” (Carr *OE*, 127). Similarly, with her highly-charged trance state, Finley is conscious and in control, but maintains that she is “led” by some other, unconscious source. She explains:

I do use trance, and I don’t know how it happened originally, but I think that anyone who is creative goes into that hypnotic state [...] I’m conscious, although I feel that something else is leading me. It’s definitely an entirely different state. It’s different from theatrical performance. It’s a place that I can’t wait to get to all the time. It’s different from a sexual, orgasmic state, because I feel it much more above my eyes and it feels like an incredible wave of energy. There are elements of control in this experience; if I’m doing something physically dangerous in a

performance, I feel as if I'm protected. I'm so focused on the activity and so intent on giving it out to people that I produce this trance and never get hurt. Sometimes I feel as if I'm on the brink of losing it because I could take this kind of energy and freak out with it and just not return, but I'm conscious when I'm doing it, so that never happens. I feel the time when it is supposed to end. As soon as it gets to a certain energy, I take it down as if it were a kind of music. (Montano, 53-4)

I suggest that Finley's adopted "trance state" is congruent with hysterical symptomology. The hysteric behaved as if her very consciousness was beyond her control, as if she was speaking and acting from another place without being present as the subject of consciousness; a reflection of Freud's theory that neurotic patients generally suffer from a marked emotional tension which arises from an unconscious source (Kahane, 12). In producing this trance state, Finley demonstrates the disturbing manifestations that may be produced by the tensions of a warped society.

Finley's performance appropriates the modes and language of hysteria to articulate the disembodied, disenfranchised Other, staging resistance against patriarchal and logocentric discourse. As a vehicle through which multiple "selves" are represented, Finley disrupts the master narrative of the unified subject. Finley's use of different voices, particularly male voices, is a disruption of the hegemonic inscription of the feminine. She performs resistance by channelling the voice and language of the perpetrator of sexual violence, and by combining male and female personae within her female body. This destabilised, multiple, contradictory self-narrating that we witness in *We Keep Our Victims Ready* is disturbing for dominant western culture. Finley's relationship to her various "selves" embraces contradictions that the master narrative of the unified self recognises as *ill* or *lunatic* (read: hysteric) (Kern, 207-08).

Historically, the figure of the speaking woman – especially if she speaks strangely, or out of turn – has always had a profoundly unsettling effect on the dominant cultural discourse. By claiming discursive authority and the legitimacy of a public as well as a private voice, and performing that claim, the speaking woman (the "hysteric" or "sorceress") has disturbed patriarchal discourse and gendered conventions of society (Kahane, ix). It is not surprising, therefore, that from the earliest stages of her performance career, Finley has been subject to charges of obscenity and madness. Finley herself comments that:

Art as transgression, or any transgressive act, becomes a Rorschach test for the culture it comes out of. In one sense, transgressive art is a kind of

psychic problem-solving, at the cultural level. It looks head-on at unresolved hostilities, humiliations, traumas. It offers catharsis – and you could say that it's only in the aftermath of a catharsis that healing is possible. But if the culture is not ready to face those hostilities, humiliations, traumas, then it responds with tremendous anxiety – anxiety which is expressed as hostility towards the artist. (*DKI*, 79)

In the late 1980s the hostile cultural response to transgressive art was motivated by what Finley labels a “huge reservoir of fear” (29). In this cultural climate, it is possible to read Finley not only as hysteric, but sorceress. If we consider the backlash from the National Endowment for the Arts and the conservative Right against artists who would make marginalised voices heard and critique culture from the inside, then we may understand Finley's subsequent persecution as a kind of political “witch-hunt.” Showalter quotes Brian Levack, who explains that, “witchhunting became one of the ways that people could maintain their equilibrium at a time of great stress” (24). I suggest that, though considerably less violent and mediated through contemporary media and legal channels, the conservative political response to Finley's work has similarities with the treatment of transgressive women in the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries.

Lynda Hart describes the sorceress as “the sister or mother to the hysteric” (113). In *We Keep Our Victims Ready*, aspects of Finley's vocal performance may be interpreted and elucidated according to Cixous' and Clément's notion of the sorceress. In performing as sorceress, Finley draws upon alternative cultural and historical notions of the hysteric. As Ilza Veith observes, “What has been called hysteria at various periods would now no longer be so recognised, and what is now recognised as symptomatic of hysteria was earlier attributed to other diseases” (vii). She explains that, “The symptoms [of hysteria] were conditioned by social expectancy, tastes, mores, and religion, and were further shaped by the state of medicine in general and the knowledge of the public about medical matters ... Furthermore, throughout history the symptoms were modified by the prevailing concept of the feminine ideal” (209). During the medieval period, hysterical symptoms were blamed on witchcraft, demons, spiritism and diabolic possession. St. Augustine's thinking had infused into the western world a persistent preoccupation with demonology and witchcraft. Veith notes that, “The theological explanation of the manifestations of hysteria was that they were caused by the person's alliance with unholy powers that inhabited the shadows of the world” (56). Hysterics fitted within the atmosphere of mania, paranoia

and blame that characterised the subsequent history of witchcraft both in Europe and in the United States. As Carol Karlsen points out: “For as long as medical history has been recorded, behaviours like those exhibited among New England’s possessed have been observed, particularly in women. For just as long, two explanations of their causes have competed for acceptance – one natural, the other supernatural” (234). During the European witch hunts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the demonic explanation dominated Western thinking, “with witches designated the precipitating agents in most cases,” while, in the nineteenth century, hysteria emerged as the “natural” explanation for this behaviour (233-4). In *The Newly Born Woman*, Clément mentions that, in 1897, Freud confided to Wilhelm Fleiss that he saw connections between “hysterical” patients and possessed, diabolical women in the fifteenth century *Malleus Maleficarum*.¹³ “Freud was very interested in sorcery. He said to Fleiss: ‘You remember having always heard me say that the medieval theory of possession, upheld by the ecclesiastical tribunals, was identical to our theory of the foreign body and the splitting of consciousness’” (Clément, 12). In one sense, then, the sorceress is simply an alternative reading of the hysteric. However, Cixous and Clément distinguish between their different qualities, and show how the sorceress performs specific functions over and above, or in complement to the hysteric, which will be discussed here.

As “sorceress,” Finley emphasises her links with the supernatural in her overall performance practice. She reports that, “I was raised with occult influences – card reading, spells to take away sickness, and things like that. My mother and gypsy grandmother practised those gifts” (Montano, 51). Finley also reiterates that, “The psychic world is very important to me and my family. I did go to psychics and I have worked as a psychic” (Champagne, 58). In reading Finley’s “transgressive speaking” in *Victims*, a connection may be drawn between the cathartic tale-telling of the hysteric, and the (automatic) confessions of the accused witch and/or her possessed victim. Likewise, the many voices and “trance state,” that comprise the hysteric’s hypnoid state may also be read as spiritual possession; thus, the effect is not of voices coming from the unconscious, but from somewhere “beyond.” Anthony Kubiak provides a typical critical response when he writes: “The total effect [of Finley’s

¹³ *Malleus Maleficarum* or, *The Witches’ Hammer* (1494), written by Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger, was a hand-book for the persecution of witches. Immensely popular, but incredibly vicious, it was the cause of countless tortures and deaths. For a more detailed discussion of the content and effects of the *Malleus*, see Veith, 59-66.

performance] is certainly akin to something like possession, as voice after voice emerges and demands attention, voice after voice pouring out of a soul that might be only voice, merely voice, empty and emptied as the dream ends and speech silences itself" (97). Finley also highlights this aspect of her performance when she explains:

Some times I believe I have other voices coming to me. So I open up to the voices. [...] I'm really interested in being a medium, and I have done a lot of psychic type of work. I put myself into a state, for some reason it's important, so that things come in and out of me, I'm almost like a vehicle. And so when I'm talking it's just coming through me. (Schechner, 258)

Perhaps even more than the hysteric, the figure of the sorceress foregrounds the association of bizarre and disturbing behaviour with *voice*, fitting into a long tradition linking women's voices with disorder, disruption and threat. It could be argued that witchcraft comes within Finley's purview, being relevant to her general socio-historical critique of American culture. In her discussion on witchcraft in New England, Jane Kamensky argues that voice was one of the defining elements of a witch or her possessed victim. She cites Puritan minister, Cotton Mather, who, in *Ornaments for the Daughters of Zion*, writes: "I will take heed ... that I sin not with my Tongue; I will keep my Mouth with a Bridle" (49-51). Feminine virtue meant careful speech. Mather published his book in the same year as the cataclysmic witch trials in Massachusetts (1692); indeed, women on trial were often measured against the idea of modest female speech. The subject's verbal style was one ingredient of a persona that made her a likely witch; whereas Puritan matrons spoke softly, witches and their possessed victims "ranted with tongues of fire" (Kamensky, 197).¹⁴

The witch's speech revealed the full destructive potential of the female voice. Kamensky argues that, "the witch announced herself and often damned herself through her disorderly tongue" (202). The need to control women's voices was one element that united elite and popular conceptions of witchcraft. Kamensky writes: "the witch's crime was often, at root, a crime of female speech. Witchcraft offered all levels of society a rubric under which certain elements of female discourse could be classified, prosecuted, and held in check" (198). In *A Brand Pluck'd Out of the Burning*, Mather makes a list of verbal choices for the witch, which include: "hectoring, threatening, scolding, muttering, mocking, cursing, railing, slandering" (272). Kamensky also lists: making "odd noises;" speech which is angry, foul,

¹⁴ For more information on possessed women, see Carol Karlsen, *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman*, Chapter Seven, esp. 223-25.

impatient and incessant, insolent, menacing, passionate or voluble; complaining, chiding, crying out, hollering, insulting, raging, ranting, raving, screaming, shrieking, tattling and yelling (217). In *Victims*, Finley uses most of the aforementioned verbal choices; for example: the waitress yells, the alcoholic rants, curses, cackles and shrieks, the father threatens, the rape victim raves and cries, the abusive mother hollers and chides. None of Finley's personae speak calmly or rationally, and almost all of them use foul language.

Significantly for Finley's performance of *Victims*, as well as verbal tone, verbal *content* was also important in branding a witch. Kamensky notes that

Witches and their victims tended to spout verbal poison at elevated male targets in public settings [...] through her heated words to prominent men, the witch effectively positioned herself as a dark mirror of male authority. [...] Speaking out, stridently and publicly, challenging the sole right of male authorities [...] to speak for them: this was the essence of the witch's challenge to the elite. Witches and their possessed victims personified the danger of female verbal authority. (205-06)

We Keep Our Victims Ready, compared to Finley's earlier works, *I'm an Ass Man* and *The Constant State of Desire*, is more confrontational to the political Right, taking to task prominent politicians, journalists and ministers directly, rather than metaphorically. In *Victims*, Finley openly criticises, by name, bastions of the American patriarchy. For example, in the piece, "We Are the Oven," Finley equates American conservatives and censors with the Nazis. She stands centre stage at her lectern like an orator, covered in chocolate and candy hearts, and speaks in a fast-paced, angry, declamatory voice, with a deep, authoritarian pitch:

We have our own Himmler, our own Goebbels – William Buckley, Patrick Buchanan. Evans and Novak – our conservative columnists who maliciously condemn artists for expressing themselves. Our religious fanatics who try to destroy and distort the artist, the gay, the lesbian voice – Wildmon, Robertson and Helms.¹⁵ [...] We keep our victims ready. Those religious fanatics want only a voice that is their voice / Not a voice of diversity, a voice of difference, a voice for choice / A voice of strength for togetherness. You see the wall is beginning to crumble for white male power. They will have to share the power, share the planet, and they don't want to. (*ST*, 124)

¹⁵ William Buckley, *National Review* editor; Patrick Buchanan, conservative politician and Presidential candidate, 2000; Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, conservative newspaper columnists; Rev. Donald Wildmon, US Minister and media reformer, who headed the "Crusade for Censorship," 1977-1992; Senator Jesse Helms, one of Finley's chief detractors.

Here, Finley claims a voice for herself, defending herself against her detractors, those who would marginalise or destroy her creativity and right to self-expression. Similarly, sorceress-style, Finley attacks associated patriarchal institutions, such as the Church, through her use of foul language and “blasphemy.” In “It’s Only Art,” Finley reports that, “All art that came from cultures that didn’t believe in one male god was banned [by the American government] for being blasphemous.” Later, in the monologue, “Aunt Mandy,” with a gesture that recalls *écriture féminine*’s desire for multiplicity rather than singularity, Finley sits in her rocking chair with her fists clenched and her eyes closed, and, in a voice rich in vibrato and melisma, like a Black revival preacher, she cries:

I want a homosexual god!
 I want a female goddess!
 I want a lesbian god!
 I want a Black god!
 I want a brown goddess!
 I want a yellow god!
 I want a red goddess!

While the hysteric is threatening in that her tale-telling involves the patriarchy and implicates it in her abuse, the sorceress is more active, direct and controversial. Finley claims that, “People are scared of my information” (Schechner, 254). Her open resistance poses a double threat to patriarchal culture: as sorceress, she does not simply exist dangerously in the margins, but fights from the margins. Kamensky comments that being able to hear a witch was a vital step on the road to disempowering her, regulating this particular sort of women’s disorderly speech (214); likewise, we may recall Clément’s argument that, historically, the sorceress’s role is conservative because she “ends up being destroyed” (5). Significantly, however, as a contemporary “witch,” Finley speaks from under the protective cover of second-wave feminism; thus, by making herself heard, Finley is not only enabled, but *empowered* by this type of vocal “transgression.”

In her rôle as sorceress, Finley taps into another, related discourse. It is possible to situate Finley in a shamanic artist tradition, in which the artist is a “seer” with “extraordinary access to the spiritual” (Kern, 209). According to Mark Levy:

In the 19th and 20th Centuries, periods in which conventional forms of Western worship have atrophied among the educated classes, modern artists have replaced the priest and the monk as an intermediary between ordinary and non-ordinary states of reality for their audiences. In short, some artists have assumed the role of the shaman ... whose job in tribal

society is to have visions in a trance state and record those visions in poetry, song and the visual arts for the spiritual and therapeutic benefit of the community. (54)

Finley consciously, and perhaps unconsciously, employs shamanic practices in *We Keep Our Victims Ready*, when we consider that the purpose of her performance is to perceive, reveal and articulate contemporary societal traumas in order to initiate a healing process.

The shaman is also a “trickster,” or “sacred clown” and a “shape-shifter,” with the ability to take on different persona(e) while in an altered state of consciousness (Levy, 54). Importantly, the shaman does not elect his or her role, but is thrown into it as a result of illness or trauma (recall that Finley’s performance art was precipitated by her father’s sudden death). The shaman also extends the boundaries of the permissible and interjects a much-needed spirit of disorder into the rigid patterns of everyday existence, “to render possible, within the boundaries of what is permitted, an experience of what is not permitted” (61). Finley does this by mirroring the ambivalence of society through her taboo gestures which, in many ways, are like the traditional shaman’s. At times, the shaman’s behaviours can become very extreme, including shouting obscenities, eating or drinking filth, simulating lust, fear or anger, burlesquing ceremonial, or acting or speaking in opposites (60).

However, Finley’s shamanic performance is considered neither sacred nor insightful by dominant American culture. Rather, Finley is more often approached with caution and fear, and encounters active victimisation. Tellingly, in “The Black Sheep,” Finley sits by the bed in her white sheet. Her vocal delivery is forceful and strongly rhythmic, becoming increasingly so throughout the reading, and she rocks backwards and forwards in accompaniment. The lights are low and reflect her face ethereally. In a voice that oscillates between a cackle and a low drawl, she tells us:

Black Sheep folk look different from their families –
It’s the way we look at the world.
We’re a quirk of nature –
We’re a quirk of fate.
Usually our family, our city,
our country never understands us –
We knew this from when we were very young
that we weren’t meant to be understood.
That’s right, that’s our job.
Usually we’re not appreciated until the next generation.
That’s our life, that’s our story.
[...]

Sometimes the Black Sheep is a soothsayer,
 a psychic, a magician of sorts.
 Black Sheep see the invisible –
 We know each others' thoughts –
 We feel fear and hatred. (*ST*, 141)

Importantly, Finley's lament is also triumphant. She simultaneously mourns and celebrates her difference. As the Black Sheep, her sickness makes her special: she is the vatic madwoman, the outsider with insight into the culture.

Finley may be read as sorceress or hysteric because she performs an irreverent Other in our culture, and because she performs in order to attack and overturn the existing social/sexual order, which is founded upon intolerance, discord and violence. In *Victims*, Finley embodies and performs the roles of sorceress and hysteric, as Cixous and Clément conceive of them, in several ways: first, as a woman, particularly a perceiving woman artist, whose excess passion, rage and energy is channelled by patriarchal society to the periphery of culture, but who performs from these margins in order to simultaneously enact and resist the ways in which her excess is filtered into culturally stylised channels. She also performs these roles in her implied reliance on her unconscious or the spiritual world as the source of her ideas, inspiration and voices; through her multiple voices and her apparent splitting of consciousness; in her focus on the body as the primary site of knowledge and experience, with a particular emphasis on nature and the supernatural; and in her stories of "difference," the dangerous but cathartic stories of the marginalised and victimised in our culture, which, in the telling, amount to an *abreaction* or *confession*.

Finley recognises the power of the sorceress and hysteric as speaking or performing figures. Her transgressive body and voice subvert the logic of logocentrism, blurring and undermining certain hierarchically organised dualisms structuring western philosophical thought: male and female, mind and body, conscious and unconscious, fact and fantasy, sanity and insanity, linear and circuitous, active and passive, self and other, life and death, mortal and immortal, and nature and culture. Sorceress and hysteric compromise the distinctions between past, present and future: the hysteric with her past memories contained within and manifesting themselves through her present body and voice; and the sorceress who synthesises past, present and future, with her many voices from the past and present, and her oracular predictions. As such, Finley's performance of sorceress/hysteric embodies and represents an irreconcilable *difference* from patriarchal culture.

Nevertheless, it seems that Finley can only rail against her containment within this system. She can assert her difference from capitalist patriarchal culture, but she cannot necessarily escape it. Ultimately, the sorceress and hysteric are repressive categories, because they represent the *problem* rather than the *pleasure* of womanhood. In the context of *écriture féminine*, Clément and Cixous advocate a way out of the system of phallo-logocentric authority through an exploration of the “dark continent” of female pleasure. They argue that, out of a repossession and reaffirmation of her deepest being, and her erotic embodiment, woman may come to writing and speaking, and delight in her difference, multiplicity, and awareness of “other” within the self. This necessitates a shift away from existing categories. Cixous advances the concept of a new language, a language of the body, through which women can be free to “dream” and “invent new worlds,” “*uncontaminated by sorceress or hysteric*” (NBW, 72, italics mine). It is through this process that *jouissance* may be discovered. But Finley’s is still a voice in pain. *We Keep Our Victims Ready* is wholeheartedly about the misery, not the pleasure, of being a woman. Despite her hopes for healing and her ideal of a world of tolerance and love, Finley does not prophesy a utopia “where sorceress and hysteric may be enabled to transcend the limits of a destiny that has historically liminalised their desire” (Clément, xiv) or, at least, does not believe that the time has come for it. Finley tells the stories of *this* world, in all its decadence, egocentricity and violence. Within this theoretical framework, stuck in the mode of sorceress/hysteric, Finley represents the symptom, not the cure.

Even if Finley, speaking from the body, were to follow through to the conclusions espoused by Cixous, Clément and Irigaray, she would remain implicated in the dualisms she appears to resist, and consequently the mind/body problem would remain unsolved. If Sandra Gilbert suggests that to represent the historical range and variety of women’s experience chiefly in terms of the sorceress and hysteric is a reductive strategy (xii), then I would argue that to offer the same means of “escape” for all women is equally problematic. Although *écriture féminine* addresses and critiques dualisms that constitute western thought, and the sorceress and hysteric are liminal figures who blur certain binarisms, it is clear that such blurring serves chiefly to emphasise female difference. As such, *écriture féminine* advocates the body, female sexuality and the unconscious in *difference* to the mind, rationality and the universality that have been privileged in western patriarchal thinking, and, in so

doing, simply cements the extant dualism. In attempting to reverse the hierarchies of mind/body that have repressed the female, *écriture féminine* reinforces stereotypical theories about women's nature. As a political strategy designed to redress the wrongs of culture by the rights of nature, *écriture féminine* implies a biological essentialism. If patriarchy has reduced women to biological or bodily difference, then *écriture féminine* plays into the hands of the enemy – notwithstanding the valorisation of woman's erotic embodiment – because it is a reductionist doctrine (Dallery, 63; Jones *WTB*, 257-58; Silverman, 146).

In her trenchant critique in *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler reads *écriture féminine* as universalist, and therefore essentialist. She explains: “universalistic claims are based on a common or shared epistemological standpoint, understood as the articulated consciousness or shared structures of oppression or in the ostensibly transcultural structures of femininity, maternity, sexuality, and/or *écriture féminine*” (19). Focusing on Irigaray's argument, Butler writes that, although Irigaray clearly broadens the scope of feminist critique by exposing the epistemological, ontological and logical structures of a masculinist signifying economy (in other words, the mind/body distinction):

[T]he power of [Irigaray's] analysis is undercut precisely by her globalising reach. Is it possible to identify a monolithic as well as a monologic masculinist economy that traverses the array of cultural and historical context in which sexual difference takes place? Is the failure to acknowledge the specific cultural operations of gender oppression itself a kind of epistemological imperialism, one which is not ameliorated by the simple elaboration of cultural differences as “examples” of the selfsame phallo-logocentrism? The effort to *include* “other” cultures as variegated amplification of a global phallo-logocentrism constitutes an appropriative task that risks a repetition of the self-aggrandising gesture of phallo-logocentrism, colonising under the sign of the same those differences that might otherwise call that totalising concept into question. (18)

Butler suggests that feminist critique should explore the totalising claim of a masculine signifying economy, but remain self-critical regarding the totalising effects of feminism, because the “effort to identify the enemy as singular in form is a reverse-discourse that uncritically mimics the strategy of the oppressor instead of offering a different set of terms” (18-9). From this point of view, perhaps it is fair to argue that Finley is essentialist. Finley's embodied speaking privileges the voice, the body and feminine as opposed to speech, the mind and the masculine, which means, importantly, that she falls into the same traps as Linklater. Furthermore, in line with

criticisms of *écriture féminine*, I suggest that Finley identifies the “enemy” as singular in form: a capitalist society driven by destructive male desire. Although there are a variety of abusers in her monologues, they are all enabled by the same force. In other words, Finley uses many voices, but they all say the same thing.

Nonetheless, Finley’s use of the “unnatural” voice has more political force than Linklater’s “natural” voice. It attempts to address society’s problems not by stripping away their effects and shying away from political action, but by confronting them head-on and displaying the disturbing effects of a sick society. The figures of sorceress and hysteric are useful for interpreting Finley’s vocal performance in terms of its counterdiscursive operations: its female resistance, the splitting of the subject, the role of the unconscious and the refusal to be silenced. As Andrew Kimbrough observes, “Instead of allowing her voice to fall silent in the face of the myriad and conflicting discourses that serve to encode and enslave the female subject, Finley reappropriates the notion of voice by its radical permutations into the voices of others, wresting subjectivity from its linguistic confines, placing the voice instead on public view, giving it a public hearing” (231).

Does this investigation help us to understand any better what the “natural voice” might be? An analysis of Finley’s performance does serve to show more clearly how Linklater’s natural voice is a construct, but because she ultimately exhibits the same limitations found in Linklater’s approach, a definite concept of a natural voice remains elusive. Is there a possibility for examining other instances of “unnatural” voices that have feminist and social force, but manage to remain free of essentialist traps that undermine that force? Could these voices also inform our understanding of the “natural voice”? I shall explore these questions in Chapter Four, which focuses upon the use of voice in the performance art of Laurie Anderson.

Chapter Four

Freeing the Cyborg Voice: Voice and the Performance Art of Laurie Anderson

We are in the virtual reality environment of Laurie Anderson's CD-ROM, *Puppet Motel*, where a peculiar thing is happening. In the Green Room, we are greeted by a virtual ventriloquist's dummy, who looks and sounds disconcertingly like Anderson herself. The male dummy, moving and speaking autonomously, invites us to watch a video. The clip we view together shows Anderson talking with a third figure, who appears to be yet another distorted male version of Anderson, with a masculine version of her voice. At times, both Anderson and her male "clone" talk directly to us, constructing an audience that includes the virtual dummy. The interaction of these three "Andersons" with their different, yet oddly similar voices, is simultaneously fascinating and disorienting. What is going on here? Where is "Laurie Anderson" in all of this? Who is in control? Who is speaking, and to whom? Why? With what effect? And who is listening?

Laurie Anderson is one of the world's most famous performance artists, known principally for her use of technology in performance. Anderson's work interrogates the concept of control, particularly as it is manifested through technology, and explores what it means to live in a technoscientific culture. In this chapter, I survey a spectrum of Anderson's post-1979 works, with a concentration upon four of her major performance pieces: *United States I-IV*, *Home of the Brave*, *Stories from the Nerve Bible* and *Puppet Motel*, in terms of her use of technologically manipulated "unnatural" voices. I interpret Anderson's vocal performance and performance persona according to Donna Haraway's theory of the "cyborg," a surgical or social amalgam of human and machine that, in its transgression of established categories, offers potential liberation from certain patriarchal paradigms and from the tautology of western dualisms. As such, the cyborg emerges as a productive feminist possibility for contemporary female identity. In reading Anderson's performance, I analyse her "integrated" and "telepresent" cyborg voices, using concepts of ventriloquism and mimesis to explain her engagement with the more complex of these creations. Consequently, I argue that Anderson's "cyborg voice" escapes the essentialisms that trap Linklater and Finley, provides new possibilities for feminist identity and feminist performance, and offers different modes of cultural resistance.

Laurie Anderson was born in Wayne, Illinois, in 1947. She began studying classical violin at the age of five and later performed with the Chicago Youth Symphony. In 1966 Anderson moved to New York City, where she received formal training as a visual artist, gaining a BA in Art History from Barnard College (1969) and an MFA in Sculpture from Columbia University (1972). After graduation, Anderson taught Art History for two years at the City University of New York. She recalls that, "I discovered that I loved just standing there in the dark, showing pictures and talking" (Anderson *SNB*, 94). She also found employment as a children's book illustrator, museum director and art reviewer. During these years in New York, Anderson became immersed in the politically brisant atmosphere of the university campuses and the art community at large. Artists in all media questioned the established art system and the conventional materials of art, seeking new concepts and methods. It was Anderson's engagement with this political and creative milieu, coupled with her teaching experiences, that precipitated her move from visual art to interdisciplinary performance art, and from the academy into the profession.

As a performance artist, Anderson remained on the avant-garde margins throughout the 1970s and gained a reputation as a dedicated and innovative performer. At the 1978 Nova Convention in New York she met celebrated Beat writer, William S. Burroughs, with whom she performed live readings in 1981. However, it was Anderson's eight-hour "talking opera," *United States* (1979-1983), and the accompanying single "O Superman" that shot to number two on the British pop charts in 1981, that brought her serious recognition as an artist. A subsequent seven-album deal with Warner Brothers Records confirmed her crossover from the avant-garde into the commercial mainstream.

During the 1980s, Anderson became one of the world's most famous and highly regarded performance artists. In 1986, exhausted from a heavy touring schedule, she lost her voice. Anderson took voice lessons from renowned coach, Joan Lader, who provided her with an entirely fresh approach to her work. Although Lader uses different methods from Linklater, their philosophies are not dissimilar. A connection could be drawn between Anderson's move from the margins to the mainstream, and her transition from using an unusual, untrained voice to producing a more conventional, trained sound.

Anderson has continued to perform throughout the 1990s, taking her work throughout the United States, Canada, Europe, Australia, Japan and the Middle East.

She is based in New York with her partner, rock musician, Lou Reed. Most recently, Anderson completed the 2003-2004 year as artist-in-residence for NASA, where she explored nanotechnology and 3D sound imaging to make a work that will focus on spirituality and consumerism, in an attempt to create a portrait of the United States at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Anderson's 30-year career can be mapped in four overlapping stages: "language objects" (1969-1972), which include collage, etchings, illustrations, artist's books and small sculpture; "autobiographical works" (1972-1975), which include her first solo performances, accompanied by a musical instrument such as an altered violin; "multi-faceted performances" (1976-1979) in which visual elements and texts are added to the performance repertoire, along with an increased use of music and the development of multi-media installations; and "electronic cabaret" – also referred to variously as "virtual vaudeville" and "cybercabaret" – (1979-present), characterised by an increasing involvement with the electronic manipulation of voice, musical instruments and other objects, and the use of photographic imagery and film projections in a large-scale setting (Lavey, 243). This post-1979 stage is Anderson's mature phase, in which her style, agenda and strategy appear to have coalesced, and this is the period I will concentrate on for my analysis. Rather than focusing on one specific performance, I will sample a representative range of her work.

Since 1979, Anderson has produced six full-length multimedia works: *United States* (1979-1983), *Mister Heartbreak* (1984), *Natural History* (1986), *Empty Places* (1989-90), *Stories from the Nerve Bible* (1992-95) and *Songs and Stories from Moby Dick* (1999); as well as a concert film, *Home of the Brave* (1986), and an interactive CD-ROM, *Puppet Motel* (1995). During this period, her work has expanded from its early autobiographical focus to an observation of American culture as a whole. Essentially, Anderson's work is about the critical examination of American culture, an exploration, through performance, of what the country "means." Anderson explains:

I've tried many times to picture the United States, which is also the backdrop for everything my work is about: memory, language, technology, politics, utopia, power, men, and women. I've tried to understand and describe some of the ways this country tries to remake itself, and I have always been interested in its many coexisting contradictions like Puritanism and violence, mass culture and art. [My work] is also a collection of the many voices and talking styles that characterise English as spoken by Americans; the voices of machines,

politicians, sitcom stars, nuns, and Ouija boards. Along the way, I've tried to touch on related topics such as the invention of ventriloquism, the relationship of music and architecture, technology as a primitive form of parasite, animation, aesthetics, and fanaticism. (Goldberg *LA*, 164)

Anderson works within the frame of American culture in order to investigate and ruminate upon the ideologies and discourses inherent in that culture, as opposed to standing at the periphery and attempting to affect that system from a distance. Accordingly, she appropriates the tools of technological culture in order to execute her performances (Hood, 1; Kimbrough, 233). Much of Anderson's social and political commentary is centred around the United States as a technological culture; indeed, it is possible to read her work as applicable to most technologised societies.

Anderson's performances are not designed simply to provide cultural description, but to stage cultural critique. The overall theme, although not identified explicitly, is *control*, which provides a framework for some of her other themes, such as censorship, violence, women's rights, capitalism and repressive conservatism. In particular, Anderson reveals the control imposed on us by technology, but also explores the liberation possible through that same technology. Anderson's social concerns are not so different from Finley's, although their modes of resistance are antithetical. Whereas Finley is out to shock her audience, in the *épater les bourgeois* manner of resistant performance art, Anderson opts for subtle suggestion, inviting her audiences to engage with her material through a process of critical reflection.

A typical Laurie Anderson live performance takes place in a large theatre space. The stage is usually relatively free of props and has an urban, industrial aesthetic. The overall aesthetic is a combination of a conventional theatre, rock concert set and a university lecture hall. Several electronic instruments are situated strategically on the stage floor. Although Anderson is the chief performer on stage, she may be accompanied by a back-up crew of musicians, vocalists and technicians, or a guest performer. At the back of the stage there is a large cyclorama, on to which are projected continual images, some static (photographs, drawings, slides and printed text) and some in motion (films, cartoons). Other auxiliary screens may be positioned in different places, at varying angles. In addition, Anderson uses lighting effects to help create the atmosphere for her performance pieces. Anderson prefers to take centre stage, talking directly to the audience with a microphone. She tells stories and sings songs, sometimes accompanied by an electronic violin or other unconventional

musical instrument or voice-altering device. Her spoken performance is often punctuated with gestures or dance. Because Anderson's work relies on narratives that point to, without necessarily stating, specific themes, she has earned the postmodern label for the deconstructive tendencies in her work, particularly her cool, detached, ironic delivery, and her ability to let meaning float free of signification through the juxtaposition of images (Kimbrough, 233).

Anderson's performance art is an eclectic mixture of contemporary and traditional performance modes, drawing upon Futurist, Bauhaus, Surrealist and Beat influences, as well as punk and cyberculture. She combines elements of storytelling, theatre, ritual, magic, dance, music, popular entertainment and sports in order to construct and play back her idiosyncratic collection of sounds, images, words and gestures from the social archive of the United States (McKenzie, 30-1).¹⁶ In her later work, Anderson has ventured into television and virtual reality, which have extended her performance repertoire. In Anderson's work, technology infuses the construction and presentation of her material, becoming both the subject (in the ontological as well as the thematic sense) and means of reproduction (Davidson, 112). Technology often appears as an extension of Anderson's body, while at other times it is used as a tool to doctor ordinary objects, such as a table, pillow or violin. Anderson says, "For me, electronics have always been connected to story-telling. Maybe because story-telling began when people used to sit around fires and because fire is magic, compelling and dangerous. We are transfixed by light and its destructive power. Electronics are the modern fires" (Anderson *SNB*, 175). Anderson's comment suggests her recognition of technology as capable of bringing people together in its role as an information network. It also reflects her dual view of technology as both enabling and hazardous, foregrounding the concept of, and need for, control.

Technological mediation is also an intrinsic component of Anderson's own performance *persona*. In performance, Anderson not only operates alongside technology, but *within* it. Both her image and her voice are mixed, mediated, distorted and transformed, distanced, projected, amplified and redirected. The persona "Laurie Anderson" becomes a product of performance, a technological manifestation, situated between human and machine, and, importantly, male and female. The androgynous

¹⁶ See J. McKenzie, "Laurie Anderson for Dummies" (*The Drama Review* 41, Summer 1997: 30-31) for a comprehensive general overview of Anderson's approach, performance style and strategy. See also J. Prinz, (*Genre* 20 (4), 1987: 383).

quality of Anderson's performance persona is a key feature of her reception as a performance artist. She expresses a fluidity and nonchalance about the fixities of embodiment, especially gender identification. Comments such as, "I am in my body the way most people drive their cars" (Lavey, 296), and "Sexuality is one of those things I'm between" (254), are exemplary of a poststructuralist deconstructive impulse in (late) second wave feminism that considered sexuality as an unstable and vulnerable concept.

Indeed, it is this perspective that differentiates Anderson from both Linklater and Finley. Linklater and Finley both emphasise the importance of the body in the production of voice and in the construction of the self, privileging body, voice and femininity over mind, speech and masculinity. In contrast, Anderson's work can be read as a response to the essentialisms of cultural feminism: her work problematises the role of gender in the construction of subjectivity and posits a postmodern subject resistant to embodiment. The subjectivity that Finley represents is, like Anderson's postmodern subject, impossible to organise as a unitary and coherent self. But unlike Finley's personae, who despite their fragmented and fragmentary nature are deeply and irretrievably tied to the body as the ground of experience, Anderson's deconstructs both body and voice as fugitive and elusive (330). For example, Anderson's choice of costume is designed to efface the body, de-eroticising it and rendering it invisible, while amplifying sound (Lavey, 258). In her early performances, Anderson chose a black jacket and trousers, a "device to make her[self] more invisible, more of a disembodied voice which can deliver the text with a passive neutrality" (Kardon, 21). Anderson recalls that, "In the mid-70's and early 80's, I believed the purpose of costumes was to enable me to disappear. Finally lighting designers said they couldn't ever find me on stage and asked me to please wear something a little brighter than a funeral director's suit" (Anderson *SNB*, 228).

The voice is the most important aspect of Anderson's work (despite being the least commented upon) and is of greatest relevance to this discussion. Anderson says, "As an artist, I have made many things – performances, prints and drawings, films, records, comics, sculpture, videos, computer animations and books, but it's spoken language that has always interested me the most" (Anderson *SNB*, 6). She asserts: "Basically my work is storytelling, the world's most ancient art form" (150). "I think of myself as a speaker ... [and] my work is always about communicating" (Goldberg *LA*, 18, 6). Anderson values the non-theatrical nature of performance art, positioning

herself outside the realms of characterisation and narrative development, and preferring to think of performance art in terms of voice rather than character and language rather than narrative (McBride *PLA*, 121).

Anderson's use of voice in performance is worthy of attention for two reasons: the substantial array of voices that are used, and the intriguing way in which they are produced. Anderson claims that, "Everyone has at least twenty [voices], bottom line. They have their hail-a-cab voice, they have their interview voice, and their most intimate voice talking to their dearest loved ones on the phone" (Anderson *SNB*, 24). "I try to make songs that use different voices and then make them more distinct" (Goldberg *LA*, 155). Her "default" voice has a soothing, conversational, slightly confidential tone, employing the rhetorical punctuation of an assured orator, but also playfully subverting these established conventions with the use of strange breaks and contrasts, such as incompatible paratactic clauses, arbitrary caesuras and unpredictable non-sequiturs. This voice has been described variously as "postmodern" or "ironic" (Kimbrough, McBride, Dery), "deadpan" and "passive" (Lavey, Prinz), or as a "neutral art voice" (Goldberg). At other times, Anderson's different voices whisper, stammer, yodel, coo, mutter, complain, lecture, yell, and speak in foreign languages, including French, German, Spanish and Japanese (Anderson *SNB*, 6).

Although the multiplicity of voices is a primary signature of Anderson's "electronic cabaret" phase, her interest in polyphony dates back to her early days as a performance artist. She explains that her nascent project, *The Talking Book* (1972), was

A wildly freeform anthology of stories on tape which included fragments of songs, letters, theories about motion, history and vision. As the narrator spoke and sang, her voice constantly changed into other people's voices, among them a two-hundred-pound baby, JFK, and Dixie Lee Ray (head of the Atomic Energy Commission). At the time, I could never really figure out exactly who was talking or how to organise this cacophonic talking orchestra, so I abandoned the project. (*SNB*, 6)

Once Anderson had sufficient experience and resources, she could begin to develop these voices more fruitfully, and use them to her advantage.

Anderson produces the majority of her voices through technological mediation, rather than working theatrically, like Finley does, to expand and diversify her vocal range. These voices, which she refers to as "audio masks," are electronically filtered, synthesised, digitally altered and computer enhanced. Many of these

artificially constructed sounds are the result of Anderson's fascination with voice and language as character tags (Goldberg *LA*, 155). For example, in her discussion of "Talkshow" from *United States II* (1980), Anderson says: "I've always been interested in the many dialects of American English, from '40s gangster lingo to mediaspeak. I often use electronic filters to emphasise these talking styles" (Anderson *SNB*, 133). Other salient features of Anderson's vocal performance are the disembodied voice (audio-projected, or directed down a telephone line) and the pre-recorded voice. The recorded voice is often used in duet with her live, spoken voice, sometimes in harmony, sometimes in discord. For example, in "Speak My Language" (*United States*), the live voice is out of synch with the recorded one. Anderson also uses her recorded voice to animate a range of talking objects, including her violin and a ventriloquist's dummy.

As a solo performer, Anderson's vocal multiplicity implies a fragmented subjectivity, which renders unstable the relationship between voice and identity, subject and object, and language and meaning. The different stage personas and voices enable Anderson to avoid an overtly personal involvement with her subjects, inhabiting multiple points of view while maintaining critical distance, and imply that her performance is more social than personal.

Anderson's voice obviously does not conform to Linklater's notion of the "natural voice." How might we understand Anderson's particular use of voice in terms of its feminist and social force? Anderson's ambiguous, liminal, technologised body and voice, as well as the general subject matter of her work, can be read according to Donna Haraway's widely documented theory of the "cyborg" (1985), which arises from the interface between second wave feminism and a burgeoning technoscientific culture. Haraway's cyborg can be read in two ways: as a surgical amalgam of a human being and an electronic or mechanical apparatus; or as the identity of an organism embedded within a cybernetic information system, in which the boundaries between body and technology are socially inscribed. Haraway's cyborg foregrounds the ambiguous construction of the body and subjectivity, predicated on blurred boundaries between organism and machine, individual and the technological, and natural and unnatural. Haraway maps the identity of "woman" on to the cyborg, positing it as the only possibility for woman-identity in the late twentieth century. This is because the transgressive, mixed, multiple and decentred nature of the cyborg resists and reworks hierarchical and oppositional categories

(inherent in Western philosophical thought, and especially strong in technoscientific culture) in which the female is always the inferior. Haraway writes:

Certain dualisms have been persistent in Western traditions; they have all been systemic to the logic and practices of domination of women, people of colour, nature, workers, animals – in short, domination of all constituted as other, whose task is to mirror the self [...] The cyborgs populating feminist science fiction make very problematic the statuses of man or woman, human, artefact, member of a race, individual entity, or body [...] [thus] cyborg imagery can suggest a way out of the maze of dualisms in which we have explained our bodies and our tools to ourselves. (*SCW*, 177, 178, 181)

By challenging culturally entrenched binarisms, the cyborg becomes compatible with and useful for feminist theory, emerging as a powerful liberatory metaphor. More broadly, for many people in the “developed” world, present-day subjectivity is mediated increasingly through technology; thus, the cyborg can also be seen to articulate what it is to live to within a postmodern technological society.¹⁷

Because the cyborg provides a way of conceiving of political identities that simultaneously transgress boundaries and make possible unexpected and improbable unities (Auslander *PR*, 116), it functions as an appropriate paradigm for an analysis of Anderson’s performance art, especially her use of voice in performance. Anderson conforms to Haraway’s more specific definition of the cyborg, in that she can be understood as a literal amalgam of human and machine. Through her use of synclavier, harmoniser, vocoder and contact microphone, Anderson creates a cyborg voice that is partly her own and partly that of technology itself. Using her body and voice as instruments for manipulating electronic signals, Anderson treats herself as a conductor of sound whose internal spaces resonate and vibrate (Davidson, 113). In this way, Anderson’s performances are produced by something part human, part machine. This type of vocal performance, produced in real time from the same embodied site and source, I shall call her “integrated” cyborg voice.

Haraway’s broader definition of the cyborg is also pertinent to Anderson’s performance practice. As Philip Auslander points out, “to the extent that much pop music and performance art is the product of human/machine interfaces, we are already

¹⁷ For more information, see D. Haraway, “A Cyborg Manifesto” in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women*, 149–81. For other more detailed discussions see Auslander *PR*, 115–16; Gray et al., 2–13. For a specific relation of the notion of the cyborg to contemporary gender concerns, see Balsamo *RCWF*, 148–58, esp. 152–53; Kirkup, 4–7; González, 58–73. For a consideration of the cyborg in film, see C. Cornea, *Performing Cyborgs*.

in an era of performing cyborgs [...] Anderson's hybridisation of the rock concert and performance art yields a performance discourse that is constructed through technology and challenges rigid dichotomies" (PR, 116). For example, Anderson frequently blurs the boundaries between art and popular entertainment, masculine and feminine, presence and absence, emission and reception, orality and textuality, voice and speech, mind and body, self and other, subject and object, superior and inferior, human and machine. Through her cyborg performance, she meditates on, and gives her audience pause to think about, what it means to give voice to a self in a postmodern technological society.

In terms of voice, within this wider framework, all of Anderson's voices developed through her engagement with technology could be deemed cyborg voices. These include her use of the viophonograph, the tape bow violin, or talking objects "animated" by Anderson's disembodied or pre-recorded voice. Because voice can be transmitted, redirected and transplanted, Anderson's cyborg voices can appear to exist outside her physical body; her relayed voice provides a bridge between the human and the machine, the self and the other in this context. These voices, which are an extension of Anderson's body but separate from it, and where the original source and present site are different, I shall label her "telepresent" cyborg voice.¹⁸

To identify Anderson's voice as a cyborg projection inflects her performance with specifically feminist implications. Rather than recruit nature or biology as woman's realm against the deadening effects of technology, she exposes, in terms similar to Haraway, her constructed nature within both areas (Davidson, 113). This discussion now turns to an analysis of Anderson's integrated and telepresent cyborg voices as they appear in a variety of her works, with particular attention to her performances, *United States* (1983) and *Home of the Brave* (1986), and the CD-ROM *Puppet Motel*, with supporting examples drawn from the performance, *Stories from the Nerve Bible*, and the television show, *Alive from Off Center*. My analysis examines how Anderson uses her position as a cyborg to articulate feminist cultural engagement and resistance.

Anderson's integrated cyborg voice enables her to blur the boundaries between such entrenched social and cultural dualities as male and female, human and

¹⁸ In this case, I am adopting Marvin Minsky's terminology (1979). For a more in-depth discussion of Minsky's definition and proposed application of "telepresence," see Howard Rheingold, *Virtual Reality*, 256-57.

machine, self and other. Anderson began experimenting with vocal pitch changing devices during the mid-1970s (Lavey, 251), including a vocoder, a digital filter that she tuned to drop the pitch of her voice so that she sounded like a man. The first time Anderson used the vocoder to alter her voice was performing at the 1978 Nova Convention with William S. Burroughs. She says that: "The machismo surrounding Burroughs was thick and this filter was my weapon, my defence. It was the first time I used an audio mask and being in drag was thrilling" (Anderson *SNB*, 148).

The vocoded voice is one of Anderson's most famous vocal trademarks. It has a deep, resonant tone, with a strong electronic overlay over the human voice. Anderson calls it the "Voice of Authority." She explains that: "As a narrator I have used a lot of different voices in order to escape my own perspective. They are audio masks and I find that if I sound (VOICE DROPS ELECTRONICALLY ONE OCTAVE IN PITCH) like this I find I have different things to say" (Anderson *SNB*, 150). The Voice of Authority positions Anderson to open a space for social and political commentary, usually on the nature of patriarchal power and control. At times, she intends the Voice to be read as conventionally male. When the Voice is used on its own in this context, Anderson's female appropriation of a male voice can be read as a feminist manoeuvre, a subversive and empowering act. Used in conjunction with her female voice, however, the Voice enhances Anderson's liminality in a cyborgian sense, as one situated between male and female, but neither entirely. Anderson accomplishes a sort of "vocal transvestism," shifting between male and female positions, and pitching ideas in harmony with, or in resistance to, one another. For example, in "Say Hello" (*United States*), Anderson's female voice and her vocoded one sit in opposition to each other: the first confused, the other knowledgeable, but elusive and digressive. In "Your Shirt on My Chair" (*Stories from the Nerve Bible* and *Puppet Motel*), the two voices work in accord; as Anderson speaks the words, she oscillates between the two voices until they segue together into a vocal symbiosis that simultaneously suggests a single entity, but a pluralism within the self.

Adopting the male voice as a synecdoche for cultural authority, Anderson performs stories and songs in which the Voice represents notions of power and influence. Anderson uses this facet of the Voice for commands, announcements, political commentary, stories dealing with ownership and control, and lectures. The piece, "Zero and One" from *Home of the Brave* involves the Voice in lecture mode. Here, Anderson invests the Voice with the cadences, inflections and pointed delivery

of the self-assured instructor. Anderson's character talks about the concepts "zero" and "one," and how these signs have opposite meanings in common discourse: to be a "zero" is to be, "a nothing, a nobody, a has-been," whereas to be "number one" is to be "a winner [...] the acme." Anderson proposes we abandon the value judgements associated with these signs and recognise them as being of equal value, since they are the building blocks of the modern computer age. Significantly, as Auslander points out, in this section of her performance, Anderson-as-cyborg not only describes the levelling of cultural binaries implicit within the epistemology of digital technology, but enacts it. The figure we see has both male and female signs, but is neither; a human being whose voice is produced by the very digital technology it describes for us (*PR*, 118-19).

Anderson often employs the Voice as a means to parody patriarchal power. The Voice becomes a stage persona that exemplifies (male) control and authority; however, it is not an impenetrable mask, but is shown to be vulnerable, subject to subversion and victimisation. For example, in "Difficult Listening Hour" from *Home of the Brave*, the Voice narrates a story of possessive territoriality. The character begins: "I came home today, and I opened the door with my bare hands. And I said, 'Hey! Who tore up all my wallpaper samples? Who ate all the grapes – the ones I was saving?' And this guy was sitting there. And I said, 'Hey, pal! What's going on here?'" The attitude adopted by the character is proprietary and aggressive, but is ultimately self-deflating when contrasted with the content of his story. For all his hypermasculinity and belligerence, the protagonist emerges as rather a wimp, victimised in his own home and subject to violation. The incongruity between voice and content is one way in which Anderson's Voice of Authority is used to expose the tenuous nature of male control.

It is important to note that Anderson's Voice of Authority cannot be equated simply with male-ness because the sound does not actually resemble a human male voice. The degree of electronic distortion reveals the Voice as a product of hi-tech manipulation to the extent that its authority becomes synonymous not only with masculine power but with technology. Anderson makes use of these two connotations of the Voice to accentuate and critique the more ominous aspects of our postmodern technological society. For example, the Voice contributes to a sense of technological dystopia in the song, "O Superman" (1981), from *United States II*, an intense warning about the dangers of marching to the beat of nuclear power. The Voice of Authority

speaks over the top of Anderson's voice sampled, cut and looped in a recurrent "ha-ha-ha-ha" to emulate the timing of a heartbeat. The song is structured around a telephone conversation, and the caller, identified first as the protagonist's Mom, is given the Voice of Authority. This vocal choice is a dark foreshadowing of the remainder of the song, when the caller turns out instead to be a sinister, mysterious "other," who bears cryptic tidings of an imminent nuclear attack. This blurring of identities destabilises and inverts familial relations: the one you turn to for comfort is revealed as the threat. Anderson's use of the Voice accentuates the song's atmosphere of warning, surveillance and paranoia. It also helps demonstrate that Anderson's theme of control is not just about the dangers of having it, but the dangers of not having it.

Another of Anderson's integrated cyborg voices is the synthesised voice. The synthesised voice is particularly prevalent in *United States*, especially in songs such as "O Superman" and "Let X = X." Anderson's synthesised voice emerges as a multiple, harmonic construction, with both male and female qualities. She explains: "I've often used digital voices, combining them into groups of back-up singers – an electronic Greek chorus" (Goldberg *LA*, 178). These digital voices do not own the monotonous cast of the stereotypical machine, but are enlivened by the recognisable, varied and meaningful inflections of human conversation. By donning the Voice of Authority and employing the synthesised chorus, Anderson is able to articulate cultural resistance from a variety of perspectives. For instance, the Voice functions as a means for Anderson to appropriate masculine characteristics, and thus to perform, interrogate and subvert cultural authority and control. It is also a means to critique aspects of a postmodern, technological hegemony. Anderson's electronically created "male" and "female" choric voices ventriloquise gender within technological instrumentation, calling attention to and playing with cultural gender construction, refusing fixity within one particular domain. Like Haraway's cyborg, Anderson demonstrates the liberatory quality of liminality, blurring the boundaries between rigid dualisms. Accordingly, her integrated cyborg voice is both a critique and a celebration.

Anderson's use of telepresent cyborg voices extends her cyborg status through her intimate interaction with other technologically created and/or modified objects, between which her relayed voice (sometimes live, sometimes pre-recorded) functions as a bridge. This strategy enables Anderson to expand her series of characters and/or

personas that allow her to offer multiple perspectives on American ideology (Hood, 102), and to elude (even more effectively) conventional modes of containment and control. As a site for resistance, like the integrated cyborg voices, the telepresent voices destabilise the dualities of male and female, human and machine, self and other; however, their use foregrounds, and makes more problematic, the dialectic between self and other, and also interrogates and undermines related binaries of emission and reception, presence and absence, and being and not-being. Subsequently, through these multiple, telepresent voices, Anderson also questions traditional notions of vocal agency, the source of sound, voice and identity, and the body as the site of experience and locus of consciousness.

Anderson has always had a penchant for animating musical instruments and other objects. These inventions have developed in range and complexity throughout her career, from relatively simple installation objects of the 1970s, such as the “handphone table,” the “talking pillow” and the “pillow speaker”; to the hi-tech intricacy of innovations like “Uncle Bob,” the animatronic talking parrot which appeared in the Hugo Boss Awards Exhibition (1996), and the “talking stick” from *Songs and Stories from Moby Dick* (1999), a computer-controlled device whereby sounds are manipulated and relayed by granular synthesis. However, some instruments and objects are particularly indicative of Anderson’s performance style and strategy, recurring in several works, including *Home of the Brave*, *Stories from the Nerve Bible* and *Puppet Motel*, and remain the best examples of Anderson’s telepresent cyborg voice. These are the violin, the telephone, the clone, and the electronic and digital ventriloquist’s dummies.

The violin has been a key element of Anderson’s performance since her early piece, *Duets on Ice* (1974-75), in which Anderson played the violin while wearing ice-skates embedded in blocks of ice. When the ice melted and Anderson could no longer stand, the performance ended. Anderson has used the violin in both its original and digital manifestations as a “stand-in” for herself and as an extension of her body; for example, in “Say Hello” (*United States*), Anderson used a hologram from a neon violin bow to create a “phantom third arm” for herself (Goldberg *LA*, 81). In its original state, Anderson considers the violin to be “the perfect alter ego. It’s the instrument closest to the human voice, the human female voice ... I’ve spent a lot of time trying to teach the violin to talk” (Anderson *SNB*, 33). To this end, Anderson developed versions of violins designed to play voices. In 1975 she created a

“viophonograph,” a homemade record player consisting of a 45-rpm turntable mounted onto the body of a violin, played by a needle on the bow. It emitted her recorded voice as she sang along. She also modelled a digital violin, interfaced with a Synclavier, so it could play any sound stored in its system, including pre-recorded human voices. The violin’s most ubiquitous manifestation is the “tape-bow violin,” which has magnetic audio tape instead of horsehair on the bow. Anderson records voice samples onto the audio tape, so when the bow is passed across the violin, the recorded phrase can be heard. As an accomplished violinist, Anderson uses her variety of bowing techniques to manipulate the delivery of the recorded voices, playing the sounds forwards and backwards, cutting and mixing the words. Significantly, Anderson does not only use her own voice. In the song, “Listen to My Heartbeat” from *Home of the Brave*, she uses the tape-bow with a recording of William S. Burroughs’ voice speaking the title line. This enables Anderson to “speak” with Burroughs’ voice, but create new meanings and rhythms, reordering his words, breaking them up, usurping and reauthoring the male voice and subverting its authority. In this specific context, Anderson assumes a feminist aesthetic power. By reauthoring the author Burroughs – a homosexual misogynist who concentrates his own androcentric countercultural authority – Anderson gains a kind of feminist control over his aesthetic authority.

Through the interface between Anderson and the violin, the violin becomes a cyborg entity in its own right. Literally, the violin is an inanimate object “enlivened” by the human voices that pass through it, existing as both human and machine, separate from, but dependent on, Anderson’s physical body. Taken metaphorically, the violin’s capturing and appropriation of voices addresses the breakdown of representation and presence in the environment created by advanced information technologies; thus, the cyborg violin conflates the distinction between presence and absence, and self and other.

A similar example of the cyborg entity in Anderson’s performance is the telephone. Anderson has a fascination with telephones, and they are a recurrent item in her performances. For example, the telephone appears as a projection in the backdrop of *United States*; as an instrument in “New York Social Life” (*United States*), a performance piece for microphone, telephone and tamboura, in which the performer alternates between telephone and microphone to distinguish voices; as a sound effect in *Big Science*, the *United States* soundtrack; as the chief structural

device for “O Superman” in which the words of the song are framed as live phone conversations and answering machine messages; as an object on *Home of the Brave*, receiving Burroughs’ voice; and as a live performance piece on *Home of the Brave* where Anderson chats with the keyboardist on the opposite side of the stage. References to a “white courtesy telephone” appear in the songs, “Sharkey’s Day” and “Sharkey’s Night” which bookend *Home of the Brave* and its soundtrack, *Mister Heartbreak*; and a telephone operator’s voice is sampled during Anderson’s drum suit dance in *Stories from the Nerve Bible*. Telephones also formed part of Anderson’s installation for the Hugo Boss Awards Exhibition (1996), relaying recorded narratives for listeners; and they function as a viewable object, topic of conversation, live link and interactive device on the CD-ROM *Puppet Motel*.

In a similar way as the violin, the telephone functions not only as an extension of Anderson, as a mouthpiece for her cyborg voice, but as its own cyborg unit. A hybrid of the mechanised and the organic, the telephone is at once a mechanical device, but, as Avital Ronell argues, at times “live,” or, at least, life punctually gathers within it and takes part in it (84). In fact, Ronell points out that Bell initially conceived of the telephone as a prosthetic organ, a supplement and technological double to an anthropomorphic body. Installed within a concept of organ transplant, implant and genetic remodelling, the telephone would have functioned as a literal cyborg (339-40). The telephone raises questions of presence and absence, stability of location, systems of transfer, the destination of speech, and the constitution of self and other. It also calls to attention, and simultaneously interrogates, the act of listening and its efficacy in completing the meaning-making act of speech. Anderson’s telephonic voice contributes to her alterity, allowing her to escape a single perspective and to inhabit multiple positions or spaces between established positions.

Although the telephonic voice is sometimes live, or present, Anderson tends to focus upon missed calls: live connections are deferred, becoming recorded speech or relayed messages. Voices are often left to the tapevoice of the answering machine, where absence is signalled by a simulacrum of presence. Such voices may be read as the opposite of Linklater’s natural voice which is, ostensibly, about being present. What does absence provide that presence does not? Perhaps, for Anderson, it offers liberation in the Harawayan sense by refusing fixities of placement or embodiment.

As well as being transferred, the voice is also multiplied by being filtrated and reproduced via the telephone. Telephonic speech produces two voices: the original

voice that sounds in the immediate environment, and the electronically mediated one that sounds, simultaneously, at a distance. This “voice and its double” prompts a questioning of subjectivity. Frances Dyson argues that:

The subjectivity represented by the transmitted voice [...] is charged, grounded in the characteristics of the unified, reflective and self-conscious ego of the Cartesian subject, while also transubstantiated through an electrical disembodiment and dispersion. Caught up in some placeless communication network [...] [the telephonic voice is] vulnerable to interference, crossed lines and abrupt terminations. (76)

The telephone renders the speaker both cohesive and fragmented; here and also there; and ontologically, in a state of being and not-being, in a way that the violin does not.

Two other kinds of cyborg creations appear in Anderson’s performances, animated by her telepresent voice. Both consist of representations of Anderson’s body in different styles and forms. The first is a “clone,” a manipulated and processed video image of Anderson created by a digital stretching and compressing effect. The clone first appeared in performance on the PBS television series, *Alive from Off Center* (1986), but has made subsequent appearances in *Stories from the Nerve Bible* and *Puppet Motel*. In the PBS clips, Anderson explains that she created the clone because the number of interviews and public appearances required of her meant that she needed to be in two places at the same time, so she created a copy of herself, a representative “other,” to split interview duties. The cloning process, however, had not been perfected, so the clone came out male, moustachioed, and three feet tall, with Anderson’s instantly recognisable male-sounding Voice of Authority. Anderson created a series of short conversations between herself and the clone (named “Clone”); in one clip they are interviewed together by an unseen man, Spalding Gray (Hood, 84). Clone is the equivalent of one of Anderson’s “audio masks,” another voice through which she can funnel ideas, “so that it’s not just always me” (Goldberg *LA*, 127). Clone is also a cyborg entity, a mediated creation that exists only in electronic form, but who is “brought to life” with Anderson’s image and voice. Clone is usefully analysed along with Anderson’s ventriloquist’s dummy.

The ventriloquist’s dummy is Anderson’s other cyborg creation. As part of her early 1990s *Nerve Bible* tours, Anderson developed a ventriloquist’s dummy which greatly resembled Anderson herself. Anderson placed electronic components inside the dummy’s body so that it could move and talk on its own (McBride *SBE*, 40). The dummy is an amalgam of human and machine; a mechanical device animated, like

Clone, by Anderson's Voice of Authority. Given its constitution, in this context it could be argued that the mechanised dummy is really a kind of robot. In an even more contemporary updating of a traditional form of entertainment, Anderson later developed a computerised version, a "virtual dummy," for use on the internet and her *Puppet Motel* CD-ROM, an intriguing example of an electronic simulation of a mechanical simulation of a human body.

It has been observed that virtual reality is a largely aural medium, which may explain Anderson's move into this type of performance. As Dyson argues,

Everything that happens in VR technology is no more than an accumulation of the auditive technologies of the past: a realisation of the telepresence and interactivity offered by telephony, a computation of the inscriptive strategies of the phonograph and tape recorder, an appropriation of disembodied 'presence' of radio, an embrace of film sound's spatiality, and an instantiation of the hyperreal sound effect present in all auditive media. (73)

The aesthetic of *Puppet Motel* is largely the result of Anderson's collaboration with designer Hsin-Chien Huang. There are 33 sites, which range from the specific detail of virtual rooms, to more abstract spaces where shapes and bodies float. Corporeality is fragmented, absent, or depicted in puppet form. The atmosphere is an unsettling mixture of abandoned fairground, postmodern haunted house, and dreamscape, in which we experience a *dépaysement* accorded by random images, boundless spaces, and disembodied sounds. In *Puppet Motel* the virtual dummy is something of an orienting presence. He chats to us in the Green Room as a kind of pseudo-emcee, taking the place of Anderson at a point of two degrees of separation. Like Anderson and her simulacral dummy, in engaging with virtual reality, we "enter a space of no space with a body that is elsewhere" (Dyson, 73), which automatically posits an ontological dilemma that both foregrounds and destabilises established notions of presence and absence. From this perspective, the virtual body could be understood as an antithesis of Foucault's docile body, released of conventional physical controls.

These last two cyborg creations, Clone and Dummy, differ from Anderson's other telepresent cyborg voices, because they not only speak, but speak *back*. In other words, both appear to have a degree of autonomy that encourages us to conceive of them as separate characters. Because Clone and Dummy represent versions of Anderson herself, Anderson engages with them in special ways, staging reciprocal, interactive encounters that display, and experiment with, relations of power and

control. As a woman creating two male versions of herself, Anderson inverts the problematic mimetic relationship that obtains between male and female. In *Unmaking Mimesis*, Elin Diamond explains that traditional, Platonic mimesis operates according to an originary model and a representation of that model. Linking phallic power with Platonic mimesis, Luce Irigaray argues that conventional gender relations have tended to posit the male as the self, the ideal or the true model, while the female has been positioned as a mirror to reflect back the masculine “self-same” in a manoeuvre that she calls “mimesis imposed” (iv). By interrupting this traditional model-copy relation, setting herself up as the female originary and Clone and Dummy as male representative “others,” Anderson effects a feminist act of resistance and empowerment.

Notions of mimesis, power, control and gender can be fruitfully allied with voice through the concept and practice of ventriloquism. Not only can Anderson’s means of animating Clone and Dummy be characterised as “ventriloquism” in its broad sense, Anderson engages with these talking objects by means of both conventional and subversive ventriloquial performance tropes. Here, I shall use Charles B. Davis’ discussion of the ventriloquist as a framework for my own analysis of Anderson’s performance. Although Anderson is not a “ventriloquist” in the classic sense, her performance strategy conforms to its broader definition. “Ventriloquism” is often used metaphorically, as a general term for any variety of speaking for, or through, a represented “other” (Davis *RVL*, 133). Furthermore, as Davis notes:

The most inclusive modern definition of ventriloquial practice is the vocal production of sounds or voices that appear to come from somewhere other than their actual source. [...] The two basic types of vocal modulation associated with ventriloquism as a mimetic technique are vocal transformation and acoustic perspective. The former designates a change of voice that is in contrast either to the speaker’s normal voice or to other assumed or imitated voices. Acoustic perspective is the principle behind [...] the voice-throwing illusion or distant ventriloquism [...] The voice-throwing illusion foregrounds the normally unconscious structural operation through which the voice is localised as a speaking agent. (Davis *DV*, 46)

According to this broad definition of ventriloquism (the vocal production of sounds or voices that appear to come from somewhere other than their actual source), most of the telepresent cyborg voices here discussed could be characterised as ventriloquised voices, too. Nevertheless, Anderson’s interest in conventional ventriloquial

performance is more evident with Dummy and Clone, so they will be the focus of this discussion.

Anderson interacts with her cyborg “others” through a series of behaviours identified with the ventriloquist. Davis notes that ventriloquists have often exploited gender difference as a way of distinguishing voices, by using character figures and voices that are marked in the opposite gender (*RVL*, 143). In their initial exchanges, Anderson sets up what appears to be a hierarchical opposition between herself and Dummy or Clone, cementing the gendered mimetic reversal. She posits herself as the subject, the most important member of the pair, while Clone or Dummy perform merely a support position. For example, Clone often appears as an assistant. In one clip from *Alive from Off Center*, Anderson and Clone stand together in front of a blackboard. Anderson is in control, giving a lecture on choreography, while Clone tries to follow her train of thought. Clone is clearly the subordinate; any ideas he offers are usurped, corrected or elaborated upon by Anderson. In a stereotypical reversal of gender roles, Anderson speaks of Clone as an object, in the same way a patriarchal husband might speak of a wife (McBride *PLA*, 292-94). In another clip, Anderson sits reading the newspaper while Clone does all the hard work of composing. She asserts her dominance vocally; her only words to Clone are harsh and abrupt, mostly inarticulate minimal responses and commands, pushing him to write the song and criticising him for smoking too much (Hood, 85). In these scenes, the female Anderson speaks for both male and female, manipulating the “male” voice, which is then made subordinate to her own unfiltered female voice.

Davis points out that the ventriloquist with speaking figures occupies a curious position as a sign system somewhere between the presence and absence of the puppeteer. The ventriloquist acts on the imitative level, representing a “character” who participates in the dialogue or narrative of the routine. The physical and vocal performance of the ventriloquist as stage figure is from a different sign system than that of the puppet. Although the illusion of the dummy’s autonomy is rather transparent, the ventriloquist occupies a position both inside and outside the imitative, as operator and character, simultaneously effaced and revealed as the source of the dummy’s voice and animation (*RVL*, 140). The dialogue between the ventriloquist and his or her irreverent dummy is a characteristically twentieth century form of ventriloquist performance arising as a genre roughly between late romanticism’s fascination with the “double” and the modernist preoccupation with automatons and

puppets (*RVL*, 137). Anderson acknowledges the traditionally combative relationship between ventriloquist and “dummy” when she says, “Often it means producing a kind of projection or an adversary” (Goldberg *LA*, 127). Contrasting speech acts can denote difference between voices, effectively employed in generating subject matter for dialogic exchange or conflict (as between performers in conventional text-based drama). Davis writes: “In conventional ventriloquist puppetry, the contrasting personalities and rapid dialogue between the ventriloquist and the ‘figure’ help to signify the separateness of the two identities” (*RVL*, 135). Anderson sometimes takes advantage of the separate personalities and opinions of Dummy or Clone, using them as mouthpieces to articulate cultural resistance. She claims: “The clone is the concept of a surrogate. At times I use it to say the things I don’t have the guts to say” (Goldberg *LA*, 127). In these situations, Anderson depends upon the conventional licence given to words in the mouths of puppets. Puppet voices serve to deflect responsibility for committing speech acts from the actual human source to the site of the puppet identity (Davis *RVL*, 135, 148), which broadens Anderson’s scope for expressing social and political critique.

In conventional ventriloquist performance, voice-throwing, voice-changing and voice-channelling all highlight an operative relationship between self and other (Davis *DV*, 46). Although Anderson makes use of some traditional tactics to create difference between ventriloquist and puppet, she also complicates and undermines them through the creation of “others” who are obvious versions, or representations, of herself. Consequently, the use of strategies that would, traditionally, signify difference, here work as much to signify *similarity*, which destabilises the distinction between self and other. One of Anderson’s strategies is to make use of the “ontological split” where Dummy or Clone start to say and do things – apparently spontaneously – that surprise the operator (Davis *RVL*, 148), but then extends this relinquishing of control until they are acting autonomously. In *Stories from the Nerve Bible*, for example, Clone is foregrounded in the camera’s field of vision (while Anderson sits at the back of the set) writing a song for a benefit. Clone questions his adjuvant status, gets up and sings the song, “The Dream Before.” The “real” Anderson’s voice is silenced; the representation has taken on a life of its own and Anderson can only sit back and watch (Hood, 85-6). This example also demonstrates how Anderson not only inverts the conventional gendered mimetic distinction with the male mirroring the female, but erases the distinction altogether by “disappearing.”

This strategy is even more evident in *Puppet Motel*, where Dummy's independence is facilitated through his mode of representation. Anderson uses technology firstly to appropriate the ventriloquist's skill through electronic mediation on stage, and secondly to complicate it, by posting the dummy on the CD-ROM to perform alone. The mechanical ventriloquist's dummy is replicated as a computer generated figure, removed from the mutually correlative stage relationship and existing autonomously in cyberspace. Here, Anderson obviously cheats at ventriloquism; since she is not visible and the medium is not live, there is no need for her voice to be "thrown." Nevertheless, because of the earlier live context, Dummy is easily recognisable, and because he speaks to us with no operator to be seen, he maintains a troubling presence in the virtual world. Like Clone, Virtual Dummy acts in place of Anderson. He talks to us directly in the Green Room, introduces us to the "space," directs us to different sites, and acknowledges the designers of, and contributors to, the CD-ROM. Anderson reinforces layers of agency by giving him the Voice of Authority and a microphone similar to the one she wears when speaking in performance. Thus, Virtual Dummy performs authority in the off-stage space, through vocoder, microphone and animation (Gilson-Ellis, 272-73). However, Virtual Dummy performs an ersatz authority. He is awkward when he talks to us, as the following excerpt illustrates:

[Virtual Dummy materialises:] Say, hey. Hello, there. Uh, welcome to the, uh, Green Room. Now this of course is the hospitality room, so make yourself comfortable. There's some, uh, magazines here, over there, and a few catalogues, uh, and I think Laurie left some scrapbooks around here somewhere with some notes for the, uh, *Puppet Motel* project. Um, anyway, there's a show going on, uh, on stage now, so I'm just here by myself in the Green Room, and I was just, uh, looking at some old videos, so if you feel like watching, hey – join me.

Virtual Dummy also seems a little bemused in the virtual space. He volunteers to fetch people or objects, but cannot locate them. In other instances his microphone malfunctions, and, sometimes, he himself malfunctions; for example, his jaw gets stuck in the "open position." Virtual Dummy's maladroit patter, general clumsiness and evident inexperience evinces a degree of self-consciousness and uncertainty about his new-found agency and, perhaps, his authenticity. His performance is reminiscent of Pinocchio: the traditional stereotype of the autonomous puppet coming to terms with his existence and sense of self.

In sitting back (literally and figuratively) Anderson diminishes her own identity and role, effacing herself as the speaker behind Clone and Dummy, and yet diminishing one of the major signs of difference between her voice and theirs. Of conventional ventriloquism, Davis writes that, "this kind of semiotic paradox is indicative of the uncertain framing and oscillating degrees of illusion inherent in this performance genre" (*RVL*, 136). Anderson's particular speaking figures can never be read completely autonomously, because they are mimetic representations of herself: we "see" and "hear" Anderson whenever they perform. For example, Virtual Dummy occupies a liminal position in this context. He is distanced from Anderson through the use of non-Anderson speech styles and character traits, by referring to "Laurie" as a separate person and by drawing attention to his non-human status not just as a virtual creation, but a mechanical one (for example, his jaw gets stuck in the "open" position). Simultaneously, he speaks with a recognisable version of Anderson's voice, looks like her, and performs in her space. Consequently, Anderson is always "present" in the Dummy's exchanges. The removal of the "real" Anderson may not work so much to assert Dummy or Clone's identity as individuals, but may serve simply to overlay Anderson's identity on top of theirs. Dummy's and Clone's presence and independence is a constant reminder of Anderson as the source, author and model; thus, she is literally conspicuous by her absence, and asserts the inescapable presence of her woman's voice: the male figures may be performing but the woman is speaking.

The conflation and complication of conventional categories of gender, meaning, power and mimesis means that Anderson engages in a Harawayan kind of cyborg performance that is liberating in its fluidity and unfixedness. Unlike Linklater and Finley, through her ventriloquial performance, Anderson confuses the notion of "voice" as the signification of identity through linguistic, paralinguistic and spatial difference. Through the creation and implementation of her representative cyborg "others," Anderson becomes a split subject, occupying a position of ambivalence between self and other, male and female, human and machine, subject and object, superiority and inferiority, presence and absence, and being and not-being. Her performance also challenges the assumption of a hierarchical opposition between mind and body. Superficially, with its dispersal of "consciousness" into other bodies, ventriloquism appears to cement the mind/body dualism. Especially when ventriloquism enters cyberculture and virtual reality, with its focus on disincorporation,

the divorce between minds and bodies becomes dramatically apparent (Dery *EV*, 234). For example, there is the “dummy” the ventriloquist’s object, mere matter or virtual body, animated by the “mind” of the ventriloquist, given voice by a controlling will. However, that mind is really another body, a voice (a hand). So, it becomes complicated: how do you distinguish the physical processes that seem to represent the trace of a mind from mind itself? Or are minds really just the mechanical processes of physical bodies (the ventriloquist or the brain of the ventriloquist), in which case the mind and body are one, and yet not one? As Anderson asks Clone, “How can you tell the dancer from the dance?” With both the clone and the ventriloquist’s dummy, how can one distinguish between the guiding consciousness and the (virtually) embodied agent? If both are present and entangled in the performative act, where can the mind and body be said to begin and end?

Anderson occupies a liminal position in terms of her own agency as a speaking subject. Several critics have pointed to the use of Anderson’s integrated and telepresent cyborg voices as somehow effacing for Anderson, revealing a lack of agency and meaning. For example, Auslander argues that technology and electronic mediation are a means for Anderson to refuse the authority of presence, and that her different vocal masks are, “vertiginous, even for herself” (*PR*, 119). Lavey characterises Anderson as the postmodern entity through which names and faces keep passing, her subjectivity always in process, changing its shape, itself an intertext (292), which suggests multiplicity without agency. These critical positions – I think unfairly – dilute the operations of voice and technology in Anderson’s work. As J. Gilson-Ellis argues, making meaning on the move does not imply that meaning is not made or that it is permanently “put off” (260). Anderson’s style is to resist *overt* agency, in order to allow her voices to speak. But this is not a *lack* of agency, but one wise in femininity’s askance authority. Anderson’s “cyborgian consciousness” allows her to occupy multiple positions and to blur the boundaries between established categories. In effect, her power lies in her ability to articulate cultural resistance without being caught within that culture’s hegemonic frame.

If Kristin Linklater prescribes accommodation, and Karen Finley describes oppression, then Laurie Anderson could be said to perform liberation through detachment. In her post-1979 “electronic cabaret” phase, Anderson uses technology to constantly manipulate how she is seen and heard on stage, developing a range of voices that express a decentred, multiplex identity that is congruent with Haraway’s

concept of the cyborg. Through her performance as cyborg, Anderson moves past dualistic epistemologies, demonstrating mobility between dichotomies and exposing their ideological constructs. What, then, might Anderson's performance tell us about the "natural voice"? If anything, the cyborg, situated liminally between human and machine, nature and (techno)culture, enacts the impossibility of a binary distinction between "natural" and "unnatural." Accordingly, this suggests the impossibility of claiming the existence of a "natural" voice. In this way, we reach the end of the argument. In reading Anderson as a feminist performer who extends the boundaries of feminist performance, eschews accommodation within hegemonic discourse and refuses entrapment in dualistic structurings, we find that we have moved beyond the notion of the natural voice.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

"Freeing the Natural Voice"?: Performance, Gender, Society is premised on the notion, and is concerned to show, that the voice is worthy of attention in postmodern performance and criticism, in contrast to the poststructuralist view of the voice as devoid of signification. Drawing on textual and performance analysis, as well as my own practical experience as a performer and teacher, I argue that the voice in practice can still articulate meanings and have social and political force, which ascribes agency to the speaking subject. Consequently, this thesis makes a contribution to theatre scholarship by reviving critical attention to the voice, interrogating a dominant method of vocal pedagogy, and considering the use of voice in the work of two prominent performance artists who have not been analysed closely in terms of voice before.

Kristin Linklater's work comes out of a phenomenologically oriented tradition of voice training, which privileges the voice as a conduit for, or revelation of, being, meaning and truth. This concept underpins her fundamental thinking about the voice. In *Freeing the Natural Voice*, Linklater proposes a particular way of working with the voice by advancing the notion of a "natural voice" that offers an alternative to our "familiar" everyday communication, which, she argues, has been distorted by the damaging effects of living in contemporary society. Her natural voice method, ostensibly, is designed to strip away socialised accretions to recover some more spontaneous, reflexive, purer, "truer" or more "real" self, which is healthier for communication as an actor and as a person, and for life in general. Linklater's idea of the "natural" has been largely taken for granted, which illustrates the pervasiveness of dualist epistemologies in our thinking about the world. Linklater establishes a hierarchical opposition between the "natural" (privileged) and the "unnatural" that is equated with the binary distinction between nature and culture. Although this is a reversal of the usual hierarchical opposition of culture over nature, reflecting Linklater's Romantic inclinations, it still subscribes to a dualist ontology.

Linklater's natural/unnatural dichotomy also has a direct correlation with the distinction between mind and body. In Linklater's epistemology, the body is equated with nature, freedom and the self, and the mind with culture, repressive socialisation and artifice. For Linklater, the mind is primarily responsible for our communication

problems and deficiencies because it internalises socialised habits, restrictions and censors, and relays these to the body. Through Linklater's training methods, which employ psychotherapeutic strategies, the body is encouraged to relax, unblock the mind, and liberate our dormant emotions, which asserts a primacy of body over mind. Along with this, Linklater privileges voice, the unarticulated sound produced by the vocal apparatus, over articulated speech, which is stimulated by the rational or socialised mind. Furthermore, Linklater's particular choices implicate her in a turbulent feminist argument, due to the traditional structure that aligns the body with the feminine and the mind with the masculine. This problematises Linklater's position. If Linklater's "natural voice" methods favour the voice, body, the feminine and nature as opposed to the mind, the masculine, culture and speech, then it plays into disempowering constructions of women and femininity. Despite the fact that it inverts the traditional hierarchy, it leaves no room for women to move beyond existing constructions.

Thus, the natural voice's potential for feminist agency is undermined by Linklater's essentialising framework. As a docile, "feminine," accommodating voice, it is more easily appropriated by the agendas and processes of bourgeois hegemony, and proves to be particularly restrictive for feminist performances of canonical texts, especially Shakespeare, where her epistemological and aesthetic frameworks are at odds: nature versus high culture, the natural voice versus deliberately constructed language.

Consequently, this analysis demonstrates the difficulty of identifying a "natural voice," and exposes Linklater's voice as constructed, politicised and informed by dominant cultural ideology. These complications and insufficiencies stimulate a search for the "natural voice," perhaps facilitated by considering the use of the "unnatural voice" – that is, the obviously constructed, the masked, the put-on, or the manipulated voice – in performance. At the same time, two mutually related issues raised in the analysis of Linklater's work become auxiliary lines of inquiry: the search for a use of voice in performance that deals satisfactorily with the mind/body problem and its attendant dualisms; and a search for a voice that asserts feminist agency and offers new possibilities for feminist performances that challenge the social and political status quo.

The "unnatural" voice in performance is exemplified in the work of performance artists Karen Finley and Laurie Anderson. In her performance of *We*

Keep Our Victims Ready, Finley creates an obviously constructed range of voices, the personae of victims of contemporary society who describe and perform their oppression and its effects in highly emotive, confrontational and controversial ways. Rather than retreating from the damaging effects of society, Finley uses these tensions, distortions and anxieties to lend *power* to her vocal performance. In this way, Finley's performance is culturally resistant, a way to expose and condemn a violent and sexist society. I focused on Finley's performance through the lens of *écriture féminine*, emphasising Finley's correspondence with Cixous' and Clément's notions of the "sorceress" and the "hysteric," the creative woman whose excess desire, rage and passion are channelled by the patriarchy to the periphery of culture, but who performs her acts of transgressive speaking from the margins, articulating her resistance through her female "otherness." This model is useful here, because it incorporates voice and feminist agency while addressing the mind/body problem and aiming at an alternative to strict dualist models that privilege the masculine and marginalise the feminine.

The drawback with the model, as we come to discover in Finley's work, is that the answer proposed by these French feminist theorists is to emphasise and celebrate women's otherness from men. So, the problem becomes one of essentialism; despite the fact that Finley's voice does have feminist, social force, and that she can claim a counterdiscursive position, Finley falls into the same traps as Linklater by privileging the voice, the body, the feminine and nature, against the dominant discourse. In this way, Finley leaves us in the same position regarding our search for the natural voice.

The performance art of Laurie Anderson with its technique of the technologically manipulated voice to comment self-reflexively on life in a postmodern technological society, offers a productive possibility for a voice that does not remain trapped in essentialisms that undermine its feminist, social and political agency. Anderson's performance is read according to Haraway's theory of the "cyborg," both feminist liberatory metaphor and lived reality, which offers a solution to the problems inherent in Cartesian gendered dualism through the ability of technoscience to redraw category boundaries between human/machine, nature/culture, man/woman and the rest. By being both, and yet neither, of these binaries, the cyborg best approximates Elizabeth Grosz's prescription in *Volatile Bodies* regarding a nondichotomous understanding of the subject, admitting plurality, resisting

homogeneity, and existing “perilously and undecidably at pivotal point of binary pairs” (22). As such, the cyborg collapses the notion of dualisms altogether.

However, if this is the case, and Anderson-as-cyborg gives her the freedom to extend the possibilities of feminist performance and identity, to blur boundaries, and to move between established categories, expose their constructed nature and collapse their distinctions, then the binary between natural and unnatural is automatically rendered obsolete. In consequence, by solving two elements of my investigation, the third disappears. When we find our way out of the “maze of dualisms,” we find our way out of the argument; within this model, there is no conceptual category or material existence of the “natural voice.”

As a teacher of voice, I have found myself in a valuable position to write this thesis. Not only has the process been constructive in bringing critical and academic skills to bear on my practical training in voicework, but I have been able to contribute to the discourse of critical writing on voice by virtue of my practical experience. While deepening my understanding of vocal pedagogy and the use of voice in performance through a sustained analysis of texts and performances, I have also brought a practitioner’s perspective of the voice as a powerful signifying medium, and an investment in the agency of the speaking subject, to contrast with prevailing academic and theoretical views. Therefore, in relating voice to issues of performance, gender and society, I can argue for the voice’s agency and need for attention in contemporary theatre and performance studies.

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